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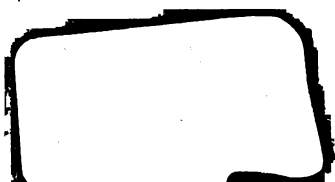
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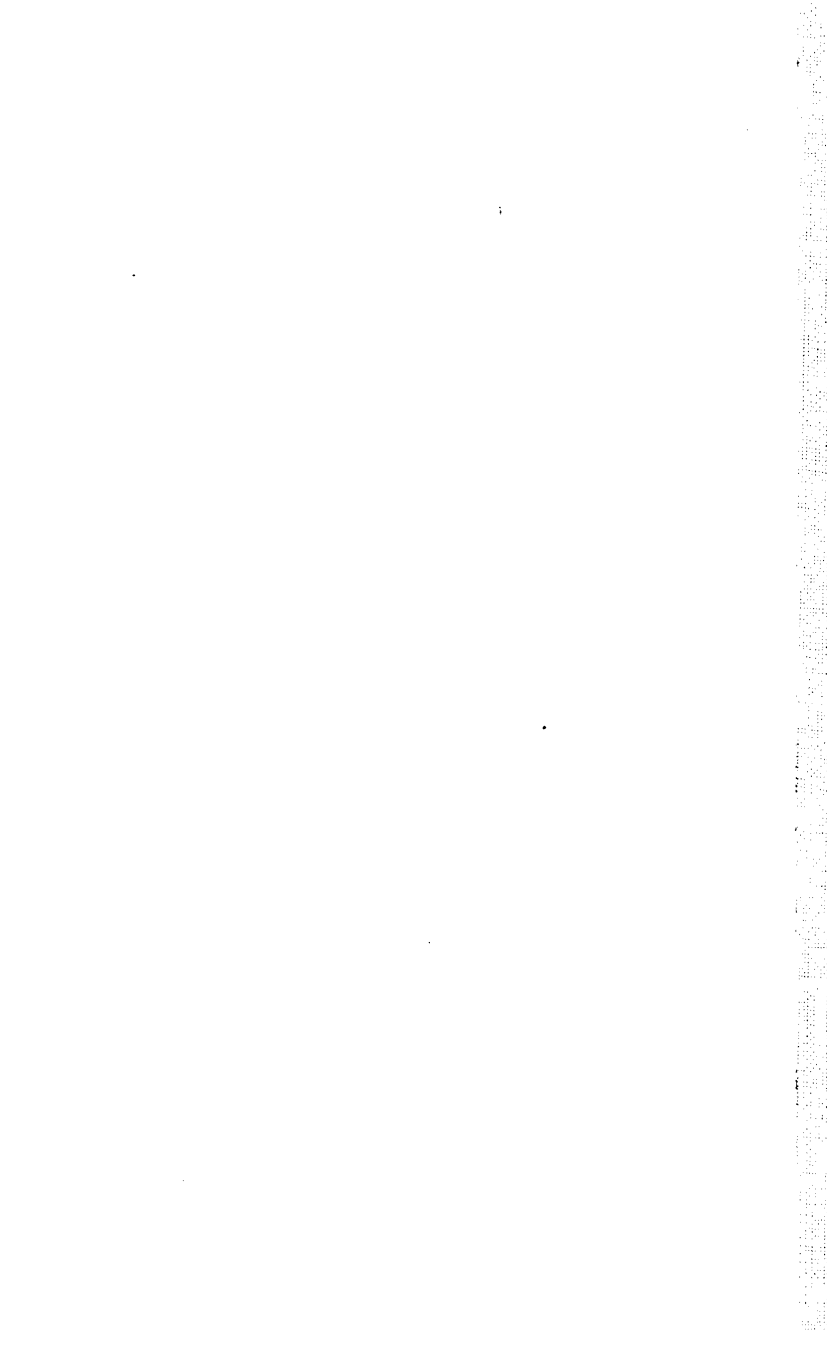
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KOHÂT, KURAM, AND KHOST;

OR,

**EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES IN THE LATE
AFGHAN WAR.**

BY

RICHARD GILLHAM-THOMSETT,

SURGEON,

Army Medical Department.

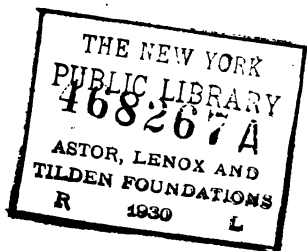
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ROY WILSON
CLARK
VASSAL

CHAPTER I.

IN THE ANTE-ROOM.

I HAD just returned from our Hill Station (having finished my two months' leave) once more to dwell upon the sultry plains of a large cantonment in the Punjab, within a hundred miles of the frontier which separates the great Indian Empire from Afghanistan. Although the time I speak of was the autumn of the year, it was still excessively hot; and who at home knows—except those who have experienced it—the horrid feeling produced by being suddenly immersed into a depressing atmosphere, with the thermometer at 92° Fahrenheit in one's bedroom, from the comparatively cool air of a Himalayan Hill Station.

It was a forty mile trip from hill to plain,

which I rode as quickly as possible, having laid out my three ponies along the steep road. I arrived very dusty, hot, and tired, in my old bungalow, the walls of which appeared more dilapidated, discoloured (from the washings of the so-called "rains"), and more uncomfortable looking than ever. I hated that bungalow when I gazed upon it, hot-looking and mournful from want of occupation ; and whether it was the change of temperature, or the dismal appearance of my habitation, I do not know, but I really felt inclined to prostrate my salaaming attendants as they one by one appeared on the scene to-welcome me home again, each with a smile of intense satisfaction on his countenance, as if he had been working very hard during my absence. It was the 7th September, 1878—I remember the day well—and having refreshed the inner man with the national beverage (brandy and soda), and indulged in my third tub that day,

I strolled over to the mess, where I found things going on just as I had left them two months before ; in fact, I could hardly believe that I had been away at all.

There reposed the same old sofa lounge, reading *Bell's Life* in bits and snatches, according to the opening and shutting of his weary optics. There were the original billiard players, who never improved five points in their play in as many years, but still were content to go on at it day by day with the utmost satisfaction and confidence in themselves. The whist quartette, too, were happy in their superior play, and capabilities in fathoming the profound depths of that mighty game. They had been indulging every day during the hot weather, and had the gratification of knowing that at the end of a year's enjoyment they one and all had neither gained nor lost, but "stood" exactly in the same position as at starting. This is a

fact quoted by whist players whom I have met, which bears out the science of the game ; and it is quite the correct thing, I believe, neither to win nor lose at the end of a long period of whist playing. As I write, I fancy I see them sitting at the little baize-covered table. Poor little Branson (Branny we called him) shrieking to his partner for playing the *only* card he ought not to have played, and thereby, of course, making a present of the game to his opponents.

Our regimental wag, De Browne, was one of the latter. He was a very funny fellow in the cold weather, and the heat of the room at the time I speak of did not even prevent him being the author of one of the most cold-blooded jokes he had ever been guilty of.

Branny suspected him of giving a hint to his (De Browne's) partner, who was an awful duffer at whist, and was accusing him of the

same, when De Browne pathetically rejoined in his drollest manner—

“I’m awfully sorry, old chap; I wasn’t telling my partner anything, and you really must let me off this once, thereby stretching a point, and in fact making it a regular ‘India rubber!’”

“Leave the room, you young rascal!” ejaculated our senior Captain, who had been previously asleep in a chair at the other end of the room, but was awakened by “that foul joke,” as he called it.

A little frivolity now ensued in the form of shying small articles of furniture across the room, and the party of whist-players broke up amicably. Of course, when I entered, I was greeted on all sides by such remarks as—

“What! come back again to this charming climate, to the plains of Sunny Ind, where the panting hart (not *her* heart, of course), the gasping and ever penitent toad, the

limpid trout, and the thirsty Sub, all combine in one glorious effort to try and imagine it's not a bit hot—oh, not at all ! ”

Another exclaimed—

“ You are as bad as the doctor who left the hills because the people were too healthy up there, and the undertakers were all on strike ! ”

The author of this remark was my bosom friend, my pal in sorrow and joy, Charlie Y—, as fine a fellow as you could well set eyes upon—one, too, with the keenest appreciation of a good joke, good music, and good wine. I mean to insinuate nothing like slander in the last-named, but if there were a critic on earth who could weigh to a nicety the fruitiness of a glass of port it was Charlie.

“ Hallo, old boy, is that you ? ” I exclaimed. “ What's the news ? ”

“ Oh, nothing,” replied he, “ except that

Loodiana fever has attacked the horses of 20/A battery Horse Artillery, and that they have lost thirty-five of their best quods already from the dire complaint, that's all the news to-day. But wait a bit, my friend," went on Charlie, now assuming a very knowing expression; "there *may* be better news ere long."

And with a nod and a wink he shuffled out of the ante-room.

"What does he mean by that?" thought I, as I strolled homeward.

CHAPTER II.

WARLIKE PREPARATIONS.

I SHALL now pass over a fortnight, nothing of interest having occurred during the time. The usual routine of a British officer's monotonous life in peace time was fully exemplified, as I find by my diary, the daily entry being: Morning ride, breakfast with the fat old cantonment magistrate (a dear, black-bearded, ancient potentate, whose only fear in life appeared to be that he was not making enough of his friends, whom I may mention were numerous), afternoon siesta, evening went to hear the band play, and walked home with Miss S—. She, by the bye, was *the* Spin of the place, and had a very ugly name, which I won't mention here, but with respect to this name I will insert a little joke.

One of our fellows, a sedate and highly proper captain, talking one day of the said Miss S—to De Browne, said—

“What an extraordinary fact it is that some people in this world have such horrid names. I think all such people, especially pretty girls like Miss S—, ought to be obliged to change them, and this I believe can be done for a small sum of money.”

De Browne saw his chance, and added—

“I daresay Miss S— would be very glad to change her name. Why don’t you propose it to her yourself?”

The poor captain saw the joke this time, and walked away quite huffy.

To resume the daily routine, I find that, having escorted the *only* Spin worth looking at to her door, and into the arms of her mamma, the day was concluded with a long dinner. Now this dinner in India is worthy of a few remarks. In the first place, the

number of dishes is very great, and the homely hen of the country is made to answer for the greater part of them, for if there be a device on earth by which the "Murghi" can be served up in a different way every day in the week—yea, every hour in the day; the native cook is master of it. In fact, all through a dinner in the East, hints, and makes up, and disguises of the aforesaid bird may be traced. Pudding is ever given to you on a cold plate; don't ask me why, dear reader. Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato combined could not have told you; but the fashion of giving one the same plate, knife and fork, &c., all through dinner may be more easily explained by the fact that at the termination of the meal there is very little for the faithful attendant to clean up. Then again (I have been in the pantry) a native will never wash up plates on a table. No power on earth will make him go higher than the ground for this purpose.

But I am now digressing, and must proceed. At the end of the fortnight stirring news arrived, namely, that the British Envoy to Cabul had started and had been peremptorily turned back at the instigation of Shere Ali, the Ameer. Now the bustle of war preparations commenced in earnest; the news spread like wildfire, and every British soldier, within a few hours afterwards, not only had his kit ready for service, but fancied in his wildest dreams that he was already face to face with the wily Afghan. On the afternoon of the same day many an officer had telegraphed to head-quarters, volunteering for active service in any position or appointment that it might please the gracious authorities to vouchsafe to him. An armed force was at once detailed to proceed towards Afghanistan from our part of the world, *via* Peshawur and the Khyber Pass; another was ordered to march by Kohat and Thall, and thence through the Kurram Valley, and a third—

the largest—was to strike out in the direction of Candahar *via* Mooltan and Quettah. On the morning of the 23rd September Charlie burst into my room in great excitement—

“War with the Afghans inevitable!”—imitating the London newspaper boys. “There’s no news yet of *our* fellows going, so if *you* want to go, my boy, telegraph at once for an appointment—nothing like volunteering, and here’s three cheers for Sherê Ali—hip, hip, hurrah!”

And here he threw his forage cap up to the ceiling.

Charlie took me so by surprise that I didn’t know quite what to say to him, but after a pipe and a chat it ended in my going to the telegraph office and despatching a wild and incoherent sort of message to the effect that I was ready and willing for war at any price.

My wishes were gratified, and in the evening I received a reply to the effect that I was

posted to the aforesaid 20/A Battery of Artillery, which had been ordered to bring its horses up to a war footing, to be in every respect prepared for active service, and to be ready to start on the 7th October. All was bustle and confusion during the next fortnight, and the commissariat officers had to put their heads together in earnest to meet the requirements that would be necessary. Thousands and thousands of camels might be seen pouring in every day from the outlying villages led by the nose.

“ Oh, ye all-suffering camel, what a life of toil and burden you have before you,” mused I, “ and how badly treated and much complained of. Gratitude is seldom given you in the shape of a pension to grass for the rest of your life as a small recompense for what you have endured for the honour and glory of war ! ”

Our otherwise quiet little station was soon roused into a state of perpetual excitement

and noisiness, and on the 2nd October business began in earnest. A dashing Bengal cavalry regiment, led by an officer who has since made his name in the Afghan campaign as a commander of cavalry, marched through the station warward. They looked, indeed, splendid, both men and horses, fit in every respect for campaigning, and one and all of them seemed to have his heart in the right place. These were soon followed by a squadron of dashing British Hussars, light weights, hard riders, and fit to go anywhere and do anything. The latter left mid shouts and cheerings, salaams, good-byes, and Godspeeds. Rumours of every kind were flying about, and if one felt inclined to believe half what one heard, war not only with Cabul, but with the Russians, was actually at hand. The Ameer, too, was so well prepared that he had at that very moment a force in the Khyber Pass sufficient to vanquish his enemies and afterwards to threaten Peshawur.

I got together as well as I could the things I should require for a winter campaign. Of course flannel under garments were necessary *in toto*, then came a suit of puttoo (a kind of light brown woollen cloth made in Northern India and Cashmere), the coat of Norfolk pattern, which I afterwards found very serviceable, especially as we were allowed to wear this kind of garment over our uniform proper, as it was a better colour, and more suitable for rough work. A waterproof sheet came next, and this, I may remark, is a most essential article, for often one encamps on very wet ground, and if you have no bedstead a waterproof sheet is invaluable. It also serves to wrap round your kit when on the march in wet weather. Brown leather belts, *à la* Sam Browne, were also necessary; a tent and revolver I had by me, and I may here mention that one's tent was limited to 80lbs. in weight, and a similar amount for one's kit was also allowed. This of course

included one's bedding, so people at home, I dare say, would call it light travelling. By the 5th of the month I was ready to start, and on that night poor old Charlie and I had a farewell dinner together. Perhaps it was not so gaily spent a night as we were wont to have; our attempt at joviality was feeble I must confess, and our mirth and fun were not of the usual type. Dear reader, there was perhaps an excuse for all this: soldiers cannot *always* be gay, neither were we on this occasion, two days before I was to leave for the front. Poor old Charlie felt it keenly when we parted that night, and one of our most prominent thoughts as we tried to sleep was, "When, I wonder, shall we have another dinner together?" Of course my friend pooh-poohed the idea of my being long away, or ever getting as much as a scratch from the enemy; but be that as it may, I know we did shake hands at parting that night a good deal longer than was usual.

CHAPTER III.

I START FOR THE FRONT.

THE next evening our Battery was of course entertained at a farewell dinner, which was, as might be supposed, kept up to a late hour. At two o'clock on the afternoon of the following day, the 7th October, we marched for Peshawur. I may here mention that when it came to the ears of my servants that I was going on active service, with the exception of one faithful fellow they all bolted, and without their last month's wages too. Now this does not tend to make one believe in the supposed good qualities of the Indian servant, that we read so much of in books. Here was a case in point sufficient to bring out any attempt at faithfulness on their parts, but yet no response to my call for

volunteers to accompany me came. My Bhistie, or water carrier, however, said he would come and share my troubles. These Bhisties, by-the-bye, are by far the best servants in Northern India. His willingness to accompany me was no doubt a great relief to the rest of the servants, who were skulking about in the bazaars. I offered him double wages and free rations, and having provided him with warm clothing, including a good postheen (a skin coat lined with fur), I think he did very well. We were only allowed to take one servant with us, so there was plenty cut out for him to do. He had to pitch and strike the tent daily on the march, cook the food of his master as well as his own as best he could, and under all circumstances draw water, run many risks of getting his throat cut, and last, but not least, walk every step of the way. My little dog, Monkey, of course was to

accompany me upon this as on all former occasions, and take her chance of the morsels left; and when I look back and think of the little creature, half starved, weak, dirty, and often dead beat from excessive walking, I often wonder how she went through it all. To see her trying to keep up with the column, often trodden upon by soldiers and kicked on one side in the dark mornings by men plodding along with their own burdens of various kinds to bear, and no time to think of so small an impediment in their way, was a sight calculated to make one believe truly in the trusty character of animals, whom my experience (especially with regard to Monkey,) has taught me to compare favourably with any faithfulness on the part of the native of India. Monkey however lives, not to tell the tale in words and syllables, but just as plainly by the wag of her tail and the coquet-

tish cocking on one side of her sharp little phiz.

Before I proceed further with the march, I will relate a short anecdote about this little dog. One day during the hot weather I was going to see a brother officer who was sick. On the way to his bungalow Monkey (who was with me) picked up a very desirable bone, which, as she had not time to eat on the road, she brought along in her mouth until a more favourable opportunity for devouring it should occur. Now at the house I was going to there were a good many pets of sorts, including three or four dogs and a couple of very cunning monkeys, which fact was quite as well known to my dog, who had often been there before, as it was to me.

When we arrived at the gate, the dog knew as well as possible that if she dared take the bone into the house it would most assuredly be snatched from her—so what did she do?

I'll tell you. In the 'cutest manner possible she scratched a little grave at the side of the gate, buried the bone carefully, and then came running along after me as if nothing had happened. On my way home again I saw my little friend root up the treasure and carry it along until she got to her own domicile again !

Our march to Peshawur was not diversified by many events that would not have happened under ordinary circumstances, but I may mention that the Battery started under most pleasant auspices, if good wishes and "speedy returns," shouted by scores of comrades, are worthy of their name. The whole garrison, in fact, turned out to see us off, and the praise that was bestowed upon the smart and service-like appearance of both men and horses as they left the station was well deserved. Our first march was to Jahne ke Sang, and I am sorry to say that during a halt that day one of the sergeants, a

fine, able fellow, was kicked in the chest by his horse and very much hurt. A violent thunder storm broke over our heads the same night, and the tents were soaked through and through by the heavy rain, and at times almost torn out of the ground by the fierce wind. We managed to get on, however, the next morning, in spite of the increased weight of our tents from the wetting, and the sun burst out grandly soon after we started. The roads were quickly dried up by the time we had completed our second march to Hassan Abdal, which is a pretty little spot, and famous for being the place where Lala Rookh was buried (?). In the afternoon we had a look at the tomb, and also visited a sacred tank which contains hundreds of fishes that are worshipped by the natives. The place abounds, too, in Fakirs or religious beggars. It was a good deal hotter the following day, and we felt it pretty

keenly on arriving at Attock. Attock is somewhat interesting, and we have a small garrison there. It is fortified in a small way, and made very picturesque by an ancient Sikh fort, which occupies a commanding position. The river Indus runs through Attock at a great pace, consequently the bridge of boats which crosses it requires the sole attention of an engineer officer who is stationed there to keep it in order. The river often rises very high, owing to the melting of snow in the mountains during the hot weather, the washings of which are poured into it, and the Indus at Attock has been known to rise as much as seventy feet during the rains. On the 11th we marched twenty-two miles, arriving at Nowshera. Everybody seemed done up when we got in, and the horses appeared very cheap; indeed, one fine animal died soon after we pitched our tents. Taroo was reached the next day,

where we found another regiment encamped, which like ourselves was on its way to the front. At Taroo the heat in our tents was very great indeed. On the 14th we reached Peshawur.

CHAPTER IV.

IN PESHAWUR.

Now Peshawur has the largest garrison of all the frontier stations, and, in a military point of view, is a most important place. It is also extremely unhealthy, and thereby familiarly called "The Valley of the Shadow of Death;" not a happy cognomen, but an expressive one, for British soldiers have tasted too often that cursed of all complaints, "Peshawur Fever," own brother to Cholera!

The far-famed Khyber Pass, or rather the entrance to it, can be seen plainly from Peshawur. The station was particularly empty and dull-looking when we arrived, for of course most of the ladies (and the ladies of India *do* contribute largely in the endeavour to change simple existence into

life. God bless 'em!) and others who had no military calling, had left owing to pending hostilities. We did not pitch our tents, as the kindness of some of the officers of the garrison enabled us to shake down under more substantial roofs; in fact, we all managed to take up our abodes in one or other of the old rickety bungalows of the cantonment. My friend B—, the Vet., shared a room with me. It was like a dilapidated barn, with naught but the four walls and our charpoys (Indian bedsteads) to vary the monotony. I may mention that neither of us got a wink of sleep the first night in Peshawur (at least we came to that conclusion the next morning) owing to our being almost bitten to death by sand flies and mosquitoes.

Now this dirty, tumble-down looking building appeared to me to be a very average specimen of the Peshawur bungalow, so

perhaps if a clean sweep were made of them all, and a better system of watering the roads (at present carried out by the flooding of ditches which run along in front of the houses, in many instances making the latter very damp) brought into practice the "Valley," as aforementioned, might partake less of the nature of that disagreeable place spoken of in the Book of books. All kinds of rumours were going the rounds of the station, among the rest that the Ameer of Cabul had at that very moment fifteen hundred men and numerous guns in the Khyber Pass. Also that Persia was being prompted by Russian influence to make designs upon Herat. On the other hand there were also rumours of peace, as the Hill tribes, bordering Afghan territory on the Indian side, were not disposed to throw in their lots with Shere Ali.

On the 18th an order was received to the

effect that the number of horses in the battery was to be increased and brought up to a war footing at once. During the first four days that I was in Peshawur, its malarious hand was already placed upon our Battery, and dealt so heavy a blow that almost all the men were *hors de combat* from fever and debility. In the midst of such stirring times an attempt was made by the few remaining ladies of the place to make things a little cheery, and I enjoyed myself thoroughly at a Badminton party where the fairy shuttlecocks, struck by "fairier" hands, did duty for the coming powder and shot. Such is the fortune of war, and the apparent wish of the authorities to make one as unsettled and uncomfortable as possible, that I was not *very* much surprised when, on the morning of the 24th, I received orders to leave the Battery and proceed at once to Kohat to joint a regiment there. This, of

course, was rather a blow to my feelings, for I had made very good friends with the fellows of the Battery, and, in fact, we all agreed that it was a decided case of "hard lines." I tried to console myself as best I could. "Who can tell," mused I, "what may be in store for me, and whether this move is for better or worse?"

The very next day I heard quietly that the very Battery I was about to leave would not be able to advance for some time probably, owing to the amount of sickness among the men, whereas it so happened, as will be afterwards seen, that I was going to a corps soon to be moved to the front, and which formed part of one of General Roberts's brigades in the Kuram Valley field force.

That night at the artillery mess I was watching a game of billiards which I shall remember for many a long day, for one of the players was poor little Wiseman of the

17th who was afterwards killed while earning a V.C., and another was Mr. Jenkins, then a young Commissioner in Peshawur, but whose abilities, knowledge of the languages and hard working qualities had already won for him a name. He was one of the ill-fated but brave men afterwards massacred at Cabul with Sir Louis Cavagnari. Another thing I shall remember (this may appear rather trivial) was the sound of the march from "Athalie" played that same afternoon by the splendid band of the Rifle Brigade. Surely there was a martial ring about it, and Mendelssohn must have been inspired with the fire of a warlike spirit when he wrote so magnificent a harmony. I had made up my mind to start for Kohât on the following day, and the only question that remained was "which route shall I take?" I might either make a short cut by the Kohât Pass, or go by the ordinary Dâk

(post), Gharrie (cart) to Rawul Pindi, and from there to Kohât in a similar manner, thereby travelling the two sides of a triangle, of which Pindi was the apex. I chose the latter way as I had some friends whom I wanted to see at Rawul Pindi. By-the-bye, very early in the morning I happened to call and see Mr. Jenkins (before mentioned), and I thought at the time what a first-rate little fellow he was. I never saw him again !

CHAPTER V.

TWO ROUGH JOURNEYS.

AT 6 p.m. I found myself settled—but not comfortably—on the top of the well-known and much abused Gharrie, which carries the mails in India, and in this instance the one that plies daily between Peshawur and Rawul Pindi, a distance of one hundred miles.

We managed to get off by half-past six o'clock—and now for the start! Just imagine the picture, dear reader! Three horses abreast—thin beasts, but of large bone, and fitted in every respect for the work. All is soon ready, and the Ghariwân, or coachman, who is dressed in a light blue and red padded coat, with a huge white muffler round his mouth and throat, and again round his head, has just handed his

hookah (pipe) to his next friend, with whom he has been smoking and talking for the last half-hour. With a sigh of a long suffering character he lazily raises himself from his haunches and prepares to mount the box, shouting at the same time in quite a business-like manner to the man who is endeavouring to adjust the careworn harness on the afore-said "three abreast," and other attendants, as if he had been waiting on them for some time. At the sound of the whip the horses strain at once, but unfortunately not all in the desired direction.

The horn is now blown with a mighty, but unmusical blast, but of no avail. The off horse turns right round in a most familiar manner, and stares the driver in the face—the near one paws the ground angrily, and the middle one tries hard to lie down. Whipping, and shouting, and coaxing, and horn blowing are now resorted to incessantly,

and although doubtless very seductive, are without a good result in this instance, until a knowing native and kind of guard to the van, throws a rope round the fore leg of the most refractory brute, and tugs and tugs, until, with one terrific and simultaneous bound, apparently quite mutually understood by the three horses, they rush off, turn the corner like lightning and are soon galloping as hard as they can on the Grand Trunk Road.

The horses are changed about every six miles, so that the difficulty of effecting a start and the divers means resorted to as an inducement to the animals to go, are many times during a long journey a source of misery to the traveller.

I slept as well as possible under the noisy circumstances, and was very glad when we drove into Rawul Pindi at seven o'clock the next morning. As we turned the Post Office gate I recognized the beaming and good-

natured countenance of my old friend the cantonment magistrate, who, by the way, was noted for his even temperament, hospitality, and for an everlasting desire to make everyone he met a Freemason; in fact, he had done so much for Masonry in general in Rawul Pindi that the lodge of that station, which was in a very poor condition before my worthy friend took it in hand, can now hold its own against any other in the Punjab. I was driven, as might have been expected, to my friend's house, and put up there for the night.

In the course of the evening I happened to relate what I considered my ill fortune at having been sent away from the Battery that marched under such flying colours to the seat of war, and when I mentioned that I was about to join a regiment (at that time unknown to me) at Kohât, the old cantonment Sahib exclaimed, with his face all

aglow, that my own regiment had since left for the war, and was at that moment halted in the very place I was going to.

“Well,” thought I, “here’s a bit of luck at any rate.”

The next morning at four o’clock I left for Kohât, and this journey, which was also a hundred miles, I shall ever remember as the most tiresome of the kind I have ever experienced. In the first place the road, which was anything but level, was what in India is called a “kutchā” one, that is, not a made road, but simply earth, or, as it was on this occasion, mud, for it had been greatly cut up by waggon’s hurrying on with supplies for the front. Rain too had fallen heavily, which made it anything but light for travelling purposes. Add to this the fact that the carts carrying mails and passengers between Rawul Pindi and Kohât, or as they are called “tongas,” are balanced on two wheels, and

that the horses are galloped fast the whole distance, and that on this occasion we were sixteen hours on the road, and my readers, I am sure, will be able to imagine how sore and tired I was at the end of such a journey.

I alighted at the Post Office at 8 P.M., and as the night was dark, the place quite new to me, and there were a good many cut-throats knocking about at the time, I was not happy when I found the dāk bungalow (rest house where one can remain for twenty-four hours and get food) crammed, and not altogether by travellers like myself, but in many instances by people who had taken up their abode there permanently (?) One gentleman got quite angry with me when I told him (he having been a month in the bungalow) he ought to leave at once, and give up his room to me, as twenty-four hours was the limit for travellers. He died since, poor fellow, so I forgive him freely.

There was naught for me to do then but make my way to the camp, which, after many enquiries, I found was a good mile away. However, after losing myself half-a-dozen times, I managed to find the military hospital, into which I straightway went, and having discovered a doolie (kind of palanquin for carrying the sick), I lay down hungry, cold, and worn out. I was in my clothes, of course, but slept soundly. An officer, whom I knew, awoke me in the morning, and he gave me a little hot coffee without milk or sugar. I then had an apology for a wash, and strolled over to report my arrival to the officer commanding, who informed me that I had been sent for, to do duty with the regiment as they were short of officers. I soon got my tent pitched, and when I met all the dear old fellows again I was more than happy, and soon forgot the troubles of the last three or four days.

CHAPTER VI.

ROUND THE CAMP FIRE.

CAMP life now began in earnest, and we all felt that we were well on the way to glory and battle. All kinds of novel ways of cooking might have been seen practised in camp, and ideas of how to live under difficulties, cropped up in the easiest possible manner now that there was a stern necessity for making the best of everything. I noticed in particular one native roasting a piece of meat in a way which was certainly novel, and I should say very good too. A trench about three feet long and one foot wide was dug in the ground, at each extremity of which a little stick with a forked end was stuck. On these sticks rested an iron skewer of good length which pierced the meat, and had a handle at one end. The man sat on his

haunches, having lit a good fire in the trench, and quietly turned the meat round and round until it was done.

After we had been in Kohât a week, and there was as yet no appearance of an advance taking place, it struck me forcibly that we might get up some little amusement in camp, whereby a night of joviality would be spent. I felt sure that under present circumstances such a thing would be most acceptable to all.

The next evening, therefore, when we were all together and smoking our pipes of comfort around the camp fire, I suggested it, and was accordingly greeted by "Hear, hear!" from De Browne, who was half asleep.

"Sortinly, by all manes," from Pat Ryan, who, I must say, was always game for any amusement of the kind; and other exclamations in favour of my proposition from the rest of the party.

So we decided that an entertainment should be given, and take the form of what amongst soldiers is called a "Free and Easy." Why it is so called I don't know, for as Ryan justly remarked—

"Ye have to pay to go in, and the sates are anything but aisy to sit on."

A programme, capable of enlargement and improvement at the discretion of the manager, as the play bills sometimes say, was made out on the spot.

"Now, boys," exclaims De Browne, "we must have something good to wind up with; so what shall it be?"

"I know," shouts Branny, "a break down *a la* St. James's Hall, with an Irish jig introduced for the first time out of London by Signor Patrini Ryanzi!"

"Don't be stupid," rejoins the person alluded to by Branny, "let's wind up with everybody dressing up in their own clothes,

and pretending they are somebody else. No, I mane"—

"Ha! ha! ha!" screams Charlie, who would not let the Irishman correct himself, and whose hearty laughter drowned completely the rest of Ryan's speech, and was at once taken up not only by the others but by good-natured old Ryan himself.

In fact, Ryan in the end thought he had been highly amusing, and must have been the author of an immense joke.

Having caused the camp to ring again with the hearty peals we settled to work once more.

Charlie now suggested (and the other fellows generally went by him) that a good idea would be the putting of all our heads together with the object of composing some impromptu verses *apropos* of the fellows and men in the regiment.

"Something witty and to the point, don't you know," said Charlie, "and set to some

well-known airs that would suit the words. Then we might have a regimental sort of chorus after each verse," continued he; "and if this view of mine meets with your approval, gentlemen, each fellow must compose and perform his own verse, and I would suggest that we all be dressed in different costumes."

"A capital idea," everyone here said.

"Suppose, for instance," went on Charlie, "De Browne writes a verse about old Hoskyns, the senior captain, and of course bring in something about his big black moustachios."

"First rate," we all shouted in chorus.

"Then suppose Branny writes a verse or two about the bandsmen who will accompany us while we sing."

"But we must mind the bandsmen don't burst their sides and instruments from laughing," adds Branny.

"Oh! I've got it," interrupts Templeton

the last joined sub ; "there's a man called Roe, and another named Priest, in the band, and these two names, I'm sure, invite the making of jokes upon them."

"Of course," chimes in Ryan, "a fish has got a roe, and this will be a fishy performance, eh ?"

"Do shut up, Pat, and let Charlie go on," says De Browne.

"Very well," continues Charlie. "I was going further to remark, only you fellows won't let me get a word in" ("No, no," from the rest), "that I would write a verse about Angelo, the Adjutant—for a pun on his name is already on the tip of my tongue."

"Very well," said I, "that matter may be considered settled, and if we have a sufficient number of verses, and the thing is decently got up, it ought to be a success."

"I'm off now," says De Browne, who

looked very sleepy, "as I am on duty to-morrow, and have to be up early, and if we are not potted at to-night, I'll sleep soundly, you bet," and as he spoke he left the tent, but in crossing the ropes outside, the night being pitch dark, he almost stumbled over a horse bucket which was standing there full of water.

A well-known witticism at once suggested itself to Ryan, who shouted—

"Hallo! De Browne, you almost kicked the bucket that toime!"

"Oh, no," answers the latter, who was ever ready and able to effectually blot out the vilest of jokes by a still viler one, "I only turned a little pail!"

After this remark we were all so dumb-founded that we merely looked at one another sadly and in utter disgust, and then solemnly and in single file left the place of rendezvous, and turned in for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL ROBERTS ASSUMES COMMAND.

THE next morning we got the sanction of the commanding officer to hold our proposed entertainment, and arranged that it should take place as soon as possible.

Now, dear reader, if you had only been in camp any day during that period of preparation for the grand event, and had, we'll say in the afternoon, been passing De Browne's tent at a time when he was enjoying his balmy reclusion, you might have heard such words as "captain," "wrapped in," "sapped in," "tapped in"—"no, confound it, none of these will do," and so on, until with one shout of triumph the words "I've got it"—accompanied by a heavy fist slammed down on a ta—no, we had no tables—on the

charpoy, would be audible at the other end of the camp. In fact this sort of thing went on all day long, and whenever you happened to come across one of our verse-making men, you saw him plodding along with face to the ground, trying in his inner mind to rhyme the most impossible words together.

However, we managed in a few days to have all ready, and on the evening of the 11th November, at seven o'clock, the entertainment was to be given. In the meantime other regiments arrived in Kohât, and war-like preparations continued. The troops became very sickly, I am sorry to say, just now, and at one time there were no less than one hundred and thirty cases in hospital belonging to our regiment alone.

On the evening of the 28th October I had the pleasure of seeing for the first time General Roberts, who had arrived to take command of the Force. He is a small man,

but very neatly built—youthful and soldier-like in appearance—and from what I saw of him afterwards I found that where smartness, coolheadedness, and sterling pluck were required, General Roberts was the man. Personally, too, he is very charming in his manner, and beloved alike by officers and men; for one of his best qualities, and one which is easily noticeable on very early acquaintance with him, is that he treats everyone alike—high up and low down.

I also here made the acquaintance of Mr. Macpherson, the correspondent of the *Standard*, of whom I saw a good deal afterwards. He appeared to me a sensible, hardworking, matter-of-fact man. It was somewhat laughable just at this time to read in the English newspapers of “an immediate advance into Afghanistan,” in fact the whole campaign appeared to be cut and dried, and apparently quite easily

accomplished, and only awaiting the order of the General to "move on." People at home little think—as anyone who has not been on active service is apt to—of what this "move on" consists—of the enormous difficulties of moving an army at all, especially in such a country as the one we were in. People must not be led away by a comparison between European warfare and this wild fighting. In the former you are in a civilized country, where railways, horses, and every invented means of transport are at one's disposal and easily obtainable—where nations are practically of one caste (I may be allowed to use the word here), and where there is no difficulty in getting food. But on the Indian frontier, the commissariat, which often has in a great measure to depend upon native resources and co-operation, is a most serious matter to be considered; and in these parts of the world you cannot always rely upon

the friendliness and help of the country people, who are bound by no laws of civilization and have no sympathies in common with Christian races. Such, then, was apparently the difficulty at the time I write of, although there was no urgent cause for an immediate advance, and we were, you may say, pretty adjacent to Afghan territory (between 60 and 70 miles).

Not much of interest occurred until the night of our entertainment, and the only circumstance I may mention perhaps is, that we were overrun by mice in the tents, who were most attentive and confiding. Monkey here had a good opportunity of improving her talents, and thrived. One of the regiments also gave a Christy Minstrel performance, which was promptly followed by the accidental burning down of a bell tent. A Station cricket match also took place, which some of us honoured, taking

the opportunity of seeing what we might not be able to see for a very long time again ; and do not all Englishmen love to look on at the ancient game of their youth ? On our way to the cricket-ground it struck me that Kohât was rather a pretty little place, and one road in particular, on which the church stands, is very picturesque, and lined on either side with lovely weeping willows.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR PERFORMANCE.

ON the 8th November more definite orders for an advance were promulgated, and we received our carriage, viz., mules and camels for marching to Thull, a place about 65 miles off, and situated at the extreme point of our Indian frontier. It is separated from Afghanistan by the Kuram River only. With these orders was also published a rider, stating that all medical officers going to the front were to be mounted. I believe the idea originated with General Roberts himself, and it certainly was a move in the right direction, for the fatiguing duties of a surgeon cannot possibly be performed if he be fagged out by a long and weary march. On the 10th final instructions came that the

force was to start on Wednesday the 13th, in fact two days after our "Free and Easy." Arrangements had also been made by one of the political officers for a native war dance to be performed by a number of hill men, who inhabited the Kohât district ; and seen at night by the light of torches innumerable, this was indeed a weird, strange, and I might say extraordinary scene. These wild Pathans, who live a good deal by plunder and ravaging, seemed to take a delight in shouting at this momentous period the spirited words of their song "Zachmi dil," or "The wounded heart," the melody to which, though peculiar, is sweet and tuneful. But when the dancing commenced the excitement was at its height. Pathan blood boiled, I feel certain, as the performers whirled round and round with great rapidity, brandishing their weapons that flashed bright 'mid the bonfire and torch lights. Away they whirled,

faster and faster, shrieking louder and louder the most unearthly and discordant sounds, accompanied by bagpipe and tum-tum. One or two of the dancers I thought very clever in the way they drew, brandished and sheathed their swords while spinning round so quickly. Everyone seemed pleased with this unusual performance, but the thought of the "coming event"—"*the* hit of the season"—the "Free and Easy" in fact, filled the breasts of many with hopeful expectation.

At last the night arrived. A programme had been printed in Charlie's neatest penmanship, which stated in wonderful Roman letters, and little letters formed of tiny black men arranged in excruciating attitudes, that a grand entertainment was to be given this evening, the 11th November, 1878, by the world-renowned troupe, who make a point of performing *anywhere* out of London. Parts one and two were to consist of songs, recita-

tions, glees, dances, &c., by the men, to be followed by a tremendous finale, "The hit of the Kohât season," performed by some of the officers of the regiment. No other idea of what this "hit" was to consist was vouchsafed by the programme, so that no little curiosity was evinced by those not in the game. All was arranged as well as circumstances would permit—a temporary stage of sorts was erected, consisting of brown blankets principally, and all officers who intended coming were requested to send a seat to sit upon, however primitive. The pit audience were of course obliged to stand. I won't detail the first and second parts of the entertainment, except to say that the saddest of songs, unearthed from goodness knows where (I never could find them in print), were chosen as the sentimental refrains of Tommy Atkins, while jokes which fully explained the British soldiers' view of the

present state of affairs flowed freely, and without respect to person or creed. But now with respect to the officers' portion. The drop scene—a half-dozen of the above-mentioned articles of bedding—slowly rose in a spasmodic manner, due doubtless to a want of proper machinery. Then a shout of applause, laughter and appreciation burst from the audience as the performers were revealed, dressed in the most grotesque of styles. At first, just the first anxious moment, as we stood there in a row, we all felt, perhaps, a little foolish, but what did it matter. No one but easily-pleased soldiers were there to criticise, and we were, I fancy, quite free from the acidity of newspaper remarks on amateur failings. Now I must tell you, dear readers, that our verses had been set to some of the better-known airs of Sullivan's "Trial by Jury." (I wonder we were not summoned for this breach of the

rights of performance, even in a foreign land !) I, dressed as an Irishman, who is not a bad fellow, "God bless him," but one who wants treating "kindly," and not jeered at as he is wont to be—took the extreme right of the position, and had the honour of commencing. My verse was after this manner—

My friends, when first we were called to the stage,
We came as a singing league ;
And if we can't get your approval to-night,
It's due to Russian intrigue !
The Eastern Question is all the go,
What is it we enquire ?
They say it's the Russians going to attack,
I call it "Roti Kháyé."

This last line especially was received with great applause, for the men evidently saw the joke at once. I must explain: In India one's native servants appear to have but one topic, one idea in life to consider, and that is concerning their food or roti (bread), when they are to eat it, and all about it; and if you at any time listen to the conversation of

a couple of natives, of whatever caste or kind they be, from the high and mighty Khansáma to the lazy punkah coolie, you will hear them in the most confiding whispers, whether in the stable, or on the road, or often, as in the case of the punkah puller, in the dead of night—you will hear, I say, most undoubtedly oftener than any other expression, the words “Roti Káyé?” Have you eaten your dinner? Hence the Eastern question joke. After each verse a chorus had been arranged, which went as follows—

So ring de banjo all day long,
And away with your old delusions,
The “Eleventy-third,” upon my word,
Are the boys to fight the Roosians.

Here we all danced like maniacs round and round to the time of a fife and drum, and after a couple of turns came again into line for the next verse. On my left stood Templeton, dressed as a soldier of the 17th Century, why the 17th I know not, except

that it was a safe distance back in the history of our land to defy criticism as to the propriety of the costume. I think he looked uncommonly like a British yokel in scarlet, belonging to some substantial old county militia. He was further adorned with a most absurd hump on his back, which would, from its sheer bulk alone, be quite impossible to imagine in the flesh. A huge corporation, the result of a couple of pillows, balanced the hump. The soldier of the 17th Century, was on this occasion accompanied by his wife, the latter personified by a young bandsman in the regiment, who had shaved his long-loved moustache for the occasion. Having to do this caused so much terror in the hearts of all our defenders that lots had to be drawn to secure the unlucky shorn one. This lady, would insist on wearing a low-necked dress—Tommy *always* does—also short sleeves *ad libitum*, and the shades from white

to sunburn as portrayed on the neck and arms, produced an effect that can be well imagined. The military stride too, I'm afraid, removed any doubt as to what sex the performer belonged, although his face, voice and acting were inimitable. Templeton and his spouse having cooed and blinked at each other in the most approved manner for a few seconds, the former sang in a most pathetic voice—

Wanted apartments for this boy, Bill,
And for his little wife,

(here pointing to his better-half, who looked idiotic, and pointed back by mistake)

All is required to a spoon and a fork,
And a spoon and a fork and a knife.

Here the wife chimed in, in a horrid, squeaky voice—

Hush ! for a minute, my darling boy,
And listen unto me,
What will the dreadful " bill " be, oh !
My own, sweet, darling, Willie ?

Templeton here carried on the story.

A home we must have soon, my dear,
So never mind the rent,
I answer you a hundred times,
With a heart of fond intent.

(here again he squinted horribly at his spouse)

I'll never prove untrue, my love,
Nor leave you, oh! dear no,
For I'm your own "Sweet William," and
Your darling "Weeping Will O."

Roars of laughter followed this last outrageous pun, and *encore* was so vociferously shouted, that they had to repeat the verses, and then the chorus was given as before.

Now came De Browne's turn, which was about the Senior Captain (I mean the verses of course), and being rather *apropos* was duly appreciated.

We've got a Captain handsome and fine,

"Hear, hear!" and "Silence" from the pit.

Oh! what a cut he dashes,
But you can't see his face I'm sorry to say,

(this was but little exaggerated)

On account of his big moustaches.

“Capital!” shouted the subaltern of his Company, who hated him.

But never mind as long as he's the kind
Of the boy that will alarm ye,
For he gives you lots of pack drill,
The doctor gives you blue pill,
It's all you want in the army.

This verse, of course, took the men's fancy, especially the last two lines. Paddy Ryan now commenced, but I must mention that he was dressed as an English farmer, so to do justice to the garb, he tried to assume a very British accent, which was anything but successful.

I wanted a jolly footman O,

Here, as he opened his mouth to say the O, a large piece of bread was dexterously thrown right into it, when cries of “Order, order,” from the Colonel (who tried hard to keep his otherwise terrible countenance), and senior

officers brought the offender to his senses. With splutterings and chokings Pat Ryan once more commenced.

I wanted a jolly footman O,
With two calves of the best.

“What a *cowherd*,” shouted somebody.

I’ve very good understandings, sir,
Says one to me in jest,
Look at me—ain’t I truly made
For the gallant Sixtieth Rifles.
On my word, sir, never fear,

(here he forgot the English accent)

I niver shtand on throifles.

“Hear, hear, Pat—hear, hear.” “Encore, encore.” “Angcore.” “Hincore.” “Hencore,” from the soldiers in the different county dialects, which are so familiar to the English ear—and the verse had to be repeated—without the piece of bread this time. Now came a verse from a soldier, one of those discontented six years’ men, who think they are very much wronged and badly treated.

Wanted a soldier boy, very warlike,
 Straight and smart and bold,
 To be drilled all day while he is young,
 And kicked out when he's old.

Warranted tough, though he doesn't eat enough,
 And very skilled in shaving,
 Two pence a day is all the pay,
 That he'll get when he thinks of "laving."

Next came Charlie's verse, *apropos* of the Adjutant—a Lieutenant Angelo, a very spruce young buck, the showman of the regiment, and fond of ladies, who all, according to his own belief, fell in love with him and his dress. He was a very decent fellow for all that, and had a good figure and a pretty seat on a horse. Charlie began—

We've got our swaggah man,
 Who doesn't care a hang
 For all the other swells in the world,
 When he's on his checkered suit,
 And his linen he can shoot,
 And has his fair moustaches nicely curled.
 'Pon my soul it's on the cards
 That I'll soon be in the Guards,
 And in London be considered all the go.
 If there's a thing I can discover,
 That I like more than another,
 It's that sweet little Angel O.

Now Charlie, of course, put on a very la di da accent and regular Rotten Row form altogether, consequently the *tout ensemble* was most successful. One and all applauded, including Angelo himself, who was sitting near the Colonel, and appeared in blank astonishment at being made the subject of a verse. He, however, entered fully into the spirit of the joke most cordially, and enjoyed the fun like everybody else. The last was Branny's, which, I may mention, was intended to bring in the names of two of the bandsmen (in order to make a subtle joke), named Roe and Priest. The verse went in this manner—

We've got a band in this fine land,
It ought to be religious,
For at least it's got a "Priest,"
Who plays so very insid(g)eous.
And if we want musician's here,
I'll tell you what I know,
There's as good fish in the sea,
As were ever caught before,
Though they might not have a "Roe."

At this the band, who up to the present

had under most trying circumstances behaved uncommonly well, were fairly convulsed, and the success of the evening was complete. Having sung our chorus once more we left the stage, but only to return again and again and bow and scrape to the delighted audience. We had prepared a farewell verse as a grand finale, one line of it to be sung by each of us. It went like this—

Upon my word you've called us back,
And I don't know what to say,
But an entertainment just like this
You don't get every day.
So don't be absurd you "Eleventy-third,"
And let us go away ;
Keep your hearts in the right place
And never show a poor face,
Good-bye! till another day.

A shot across the camp here seemed opportunely to put an end to our entertainment, and as we were all pretty tired—surrounded by the admiring and congratulating crowd—we bade adieu and turned in for the night.

CHAPTER IX.

WE LEAVE KOHÂT.

As I said before, orders had come to the effect that we were to march on the 13th, so there was not much time to lose in getting our things together, and paying the few bills we had contracted during our stay in Kohât. I may mention that a box containing my mess clothes, white shirts, and a few other sundries which of course would be no longer required, I made arrangements to leave with Charlie's wife in Kohât. This was also necessary as the amount of baggage allowed to each officer was now strictly to be cut down to regulation, viz., 80lbs., and this to include one's kit and bedding. Anything over that amount would be left behind, the worst of it being that a Transport Officer

was detailed to examine all baggage on the morning of marching, and any surplus that could be discovered he had authority to there and then cast off the mule or camel that carried it. There was, therefore, great difficulty, as Charlie remarked, to even sneak in a Prayer Book. Each officer was allowed one mule or half a camel for the accommodation of his kit, and the animal, or half the camel, as the case might be, had to carry a tent (limited to) 80lbs. as well as the aforementioned baggage. But when one calmly surveyed the condition of one's faithful attendant with regard to the weight of baggage *he* was allowed, and compared it with one's own, it caused quite a feeling of contentment, for these unfortunates were only allowed to bring 10lbs. of kit (to include bedding), and it was really laughable to observe our servants looking aghast after weighing carefully their usual number of

lotas (brass drinking and cooking utensils) to find the wretched 10lbs. already furnished ; so it always ended in their having to observe the most careful laws of self denial and economy, and to cast aside such thoughts as prompted a change of linen or pointed to an extra pair of ammunition boots (the servants were allowed to wear these at the master's expense). We were ordered to march in serge patrols, covered with a greyish coloured surtout, or Norfolk jacket. This greyish, brown-colour is called khâki in India, which means mud-coloured, and it is a very admirable tint, too, and one difficult to see in brushwood. Our great-coats we wore rolled across the left shoulder. Wooden scabbards for swords also became the order of the day, the object being lightness, prevention from glittering in the sun, a flashing sword being very conspicuous, and to preserve the edge of the blade which had already been

sharpened. It was capital just at this time to hear the remarks of the youngsters, especially the evening before we marched. I heard one say, "I should like to be just dropping into the Criterion to-night;" and I dare say he meant it, too, for at such times as these, when one suffers from privations of all kinds, although the excitement prevents one having much time for meditation upon happier days, joys and pleasures of the past will crop up and stare us in the face at the very time we don't want to think of them. Ah me! In the cold cold tent, with the rumbling of camels outside, with nought but bare hills before and around us, with everyone about us black enemies, and with hard times ahead, some of us no doubt wished that night that we were by the homely fire-side with beaming young faces to lend more charm to the happiness. Many of us, too, now remembered the last time the hand of a

loving wife or mother was grasped in ours, a time when such comfort was not half appreciated because it was so well within our reach. Ah me ! To see the line of camels stretching away on the wearisome journey, to here the hundreds of shivering coolies muttering their prayers to different gods, to see the scores of doolies and hear the hum and groan of the dooli-bearers, the sick, too, the stragglers, the grumblers, the careless of life, the discontented, the thoughtful, the down-cast, the elated ! 'Twas a sight, indeed ! We started at 5 A.M. on the 13th November, and amongst the company I noticed an old Belgian Roman Catholic priest tramping along with a stout alpenstock in his hand and looking as if he meant business. I saw him many times afterwards, and noticed the great attention he paid to the sick under his spiritual care, and the total want of selfishness with which he did his duty. He was a

good old sort, and deserved more notice and appreciation than he got, but such is life.

The road was not bad by any means, although it was a most unfrequented one by Europeans. Officials from Kohât, however, were in the habit of going at times as far as Hungoo, a little place half way to Thall, where there is a dâk bungalow or resting place. Soon after we got away on the high road the cart carrying the treasure chest broke down, and although this event spoke well for the amount of money we must have been taking with us, it was anything but convenient, and necessitated, I believe, the carrying back of the treasure to Kohât by some means or other. My little dog Monkey followed close to heel the whole of the march, and performed the journey most creditably, as did the men, for very few of them fell out of the ranks. We met a good many armed bands of ruffianly look-

ing fellows on the road, but they merely stared at us as an Asiatic only can stare, and passed on confidentially and quietly. I had a very bad headache in the evening and felt a bit out of sorts. I found that one soon gets over all feelings of delicacy when roughing it, and the black servants are allowed to cut up the bread, etc., and give it to us out of their hands, a thing one would be shocked at in peaceful times. I must say that, considering the circumstances, our dieting was first rate, and we made the best of all short comings in the way of butter, etc. We were not yet put upon rations like the men—this was to come. Some very excellent cigars were to be had at a reasonable price, and they were not spared. One's dinner service was of course extremely primitive, each fellow having to supply his own wants in that respect. It consisted generally of one (some of the field officers sported two!) iron

plate, one ditto cup and saucer, a knife, fork, and spoon, "bus!" Then we had a good deal of difficulty in planning a means of being seated at meals in a Christian-like manner. I prided myself immensely on a three-legged stool, rather drunken-looking certainly, but which answered the purpose admirably until it was deprived of one of its limbs, the result of the great facility for use it afforded in after-dinner "ructions." My salt and pepper box was of tin—two in one—"prim-evil" and bad at the bottom, but to all intents and purposes serviceable and "holy" at the top. I turned in rather early after the first day's march, but was unfortunately doomed to listen to the following joke at the hands of Ryan before doing so. He came bustling into my tent and said he had a "thrueshitory" to tell me about his late Colonel (Paddy Ryan had been in the 88th before he joined us). I knew I was in for something,

so allowed him to go on. "Well," says Ryan, "ye know our Colonel was a particular shmart fellow, and wouldn't have a whisker in the Corps, officer or man; so one day on parade, it having been brought to his notice that some of the men had been growing their whiskers, he gave out this address:—"Now my men I would like to see all clean cheeks from this date in the ranks, so all of you that have whiskers will be good enough to shave them off," and turning to go away he added, 'Of course those who haven't got any needn't mind.'" I turned Ryan promptly out of my tent and soon fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE MARCH TO THALL.

THE next day we started sharp at 5.30 A.M., and I noticed an increase in the number of sick (especially cases of fever) since the previous day, and that the doolies were freely occupied. It was bitterly cold in the early morning, with a strong wind blowing, and as the days were still very hot, one's constitution was a good deal tried by the changes of temperature. Our second march, although a short one, was rather harassing, the road being bad and in some places hardly passable. We were also obliged to wade through a couple of streams, knee deep, and I got very wet. It was laughable to see the soldiers on the sly getting across on the backs of coolies, in various positions of discomfort and "piggaback." Confound the band, too! for

just as we managed to get across the second stream, wet, cold and hungry, it pulled our legs by striking up "Home, sweet home!" But it's just like soldiers, who ever choose under all circumstances the most pathetic and unsuitable songs wherewith to while away the time, and certainly the good old melody referred to was most inappropriate that day, for, like Mark Tapley, I have since found that there is a great deal of merit and credit in being jolly under the most trying conditions. I may mention that we were the first British regiment that had ever been in this part of the world. On arriving near our camping ground we were met and "played in " by the band of a native regiment—the 23rd Pioneers—a very fine corps. They, it appears, were at the time employed in making parts of the road passable, to do which a good deal of rock blasting was necessary. This was urgent too on account of the

dâk or mail carts being able to commence running as soon as possible between Kohât and Thall. Brigadier-General Cobbe and Staff joined us the same day, and the next morning we marched again. Thirteen miles were put to our credit, and we arrived after a very dreary march at a picturesque greensward, where we camped. Here we found a squadron of the 10th Hussars, a Battery of Horse Artillery, and the 12th Bengal Cavalry. These troops had, I believe, come back from Thall on account of some deaths having occurred among the horses there, a consequence of bad fodder. The grass here was uncommonly good and fresh, and just the thing for the quods. Half-an-hour earlier saw us off the next morning, and it was terribly cold, the air feeling quite frosty. My mule, by-the-bye, was awfully frisky (the result no doubt of the keenness of the air) or "bobbery," as that condition is called in

the East, and promptly relieved himself of my tent and kit soon after starting. This was much to the disadvantage of my personal comfort, for time lost in getting one's baggage safely fastened on to the animal's back again means getting into camp late, thereby necessitating having to wait some time before getting one's tent pitched, and having a wash, &c. However, I was doomed to suffer discomfort on this occasion, for my beast of burden threw everything off his back no less than three times, which made my servant swear horribly in his mother tongue—a tongue, too, with great facilities for angry language, and delayed the erection of my “house” for several hours. The “surroundings” of this life, as Branny says, are very fine! There is something mournful in these early morning marches, sometimes by moonlight, sometimes in darkness. A sad silence seems always to pervade the scene, and the

men tramp along very quietly. Yes, no one appears to have anything to say even to the man walking closely by his side, and as the band rings out some well-known air, it brings back memories of the past, and who can tell how many during such moments are shedding a silent tear, hidden in the darkness from the eyes of all men! We arrived at Thall on the 18th of November, after an exceedingly rough march, the road being crowded with large round stones. The surrounding country appeared to be composed in the main of river beds, which, on account of the huge boulders, rocks and stones, made the advance more difficult. We only completed nine miles on this last day's march, and we were now all pretty well accustomed to walking: indeed, it is surprising how easy long distances become with a little practice, and one feels quite capable of finishing a march and then knocking about camp for the remainder of

the day without inconvenience. Our orders were that no further advance was to be made by the troops until the 21st, thereby awaiting a final answer (if there were any) to our ultimatum, from the Ameer Shere Ali. We were escorted into Thall by no less than three bands belonging to native regiments already brigaded there, viz: a battalion of Ghoorckhas, the 5th Punjab Native Infantry, and the 29th Punjab Native Infantry. Our camp was pitched on a high rocky mound (simply covered with stones of all sizes) overlooking Afghanistan, which was separated from us by the Kuram river only; in fact, we were only about a mile and a-half from Afghan territory. The men had to set about at once clearing away the stones, as they would no doubt prove a very uncomfortable basis whereon to put our beds. The ground, too, was extremely hard, and lots of tent-pegs were shattered before a satisfactory "bite"

could be obtained. Looking in one direction from our encampment, there was a pretty little bit of scenery in the form of undulating green hills, on the summit of one of which appeared to be an old temple or fort. Taking this with the river running beneath, gave rise to a comparison being made in the minds of some to a bit of Rhine scenery, but this I think must have been a stretch of the imagination. Just across the river stood an Afghan fort, called Kappyunga, which with the aid of field glasses appeared to consist of four walls with towers at each corner, and we could distinctly make out a sentry at the entrance to the fort. On a high rock overhanging the Kuram river, and about three-quarters of a mile from camp, was our advanced post, held by a Company of the 29th Native Infantry, and just below that again a bridge was being constructed across the river to allow the army to pass over.

The Waziris, or tribe that occupied the opposite hills, are a most treacherous race, and a little Ghoorkha who was quietly fishing in the Kuram river a few days before had his head removed by one of these gentlemen, who crept up like a cat behind him and did the deed dexterously. After that, stringent orders were issued to the effect that no one was, under any pretence whatever, to go to the river without a proper escort. This was absolutely necessary, for the treachery of the people about Thall was very great, and as they were all armed to the teeth, and kept their talwars (swords) as sharp as razors, one had to be extremely careful not to expose one's person with impunity.

CHAPTER XI.

DOINGS IN THALL.

It was a great relief to be able to lie in bed the day after we arrived in Thall, and when the *reveillé* sounded at the usual dismal hour it was indeed perfect happiness to be able to despise the warning without the fear of having one's tent struck on top of your head before you knew where you were. Troops began to collect fast, and were being gradually formed into two brigades, the whole under the command of General Roberts. I think I am about correct in the following statement of the formation of these Brigades:—

1ST BRIGADE—

Brigadier-General Cobbe, 17th Regiment—
Commanding.

Staff.

Lieut. Reader, 17th Regiment, A.D.C.

Capt. Scott, V.C., 2nd Sikhs—Brigade Major.

Troops.

F/a Battery Royal Horse Artillery.

One Mountain Battery.

12th Bengal Cavalry.

8th the King's Regiment.

2nd Punjab Native Infantry.

5th Punjab Native Infantry.

29th Punjab Native Infantry.

2ND BRIGADE—

Brigadier-General Thelwell, 21st P.N.I.—Commanding.

Staff.

Lieut. Turner, 8th King's, A.D.C.

Capt. Morton, 6th Regiment—Brigade Major.

Troops.

Half of G/3 Royal Artillery (the other half at Kohât).

10th Hussars—one squadron of 100 men.

72nd Highlanders—one wing.

5th Ghoorkhas.

23rd Pioneers.

I may mention that on General Roberts's personal staff, were—

Major Galbraith—Assistant-Adjutant-General.

Major Collett—Assist. Quarter-Master-General.

Deputy Surgeon-General Allen, C.B.—Principal Medical Officer.

Lieut.-Colonel Perkins—Royal Engineers.

Lieut.-Colonel Lindsay—Royal Artillery.

Major Badcock—Commissariat Department.

The Rev. Adams.

Captain Prettyman, &c.

Now the first of the Brigades was to advance at once, if required, the other to follow the next day. All we were waiting for was the final order, and a good many of us were hoping that it might please the wily Ameer to pitch our ultimatum to the dogs, and say, "Come on, ye cripples!" In the meantime we were all busy breaking up the mess, which, though not a very first rate one, had helped no doubt to bring us together a good deal during the march from Kohât. Such an institution, however, could no longer be entertained, it being quite an understood thing that everybody would in future have to get his meals cooked the best way he could. We all decided to pair off, therefore, in messes of two; Charlie and I soon coming to

a mutual agreement, De Browne and Ryan doing the same, and so on. Any tinned provisions, cigars, tea and other luxuries that remained on hand in the mess were disposed of by auction and demanded large prices. The next thing to do was, as Charlie termed it, "break in" our boots, for ammunition boots are anything but pliable when straight out of store, so that our fellows might be seen walking about like madmen with naked feet stuck into drenching boots to make them mould to the shape. This process was followed by oiling and rubbing, and I did hear the doctor remark that there was a tremendous run on the castor oil at Thall. Soiled clothes were all washed, swords and revolvers burnished, and other little details scrupulously attended to in preparation for war. I may mention that on such service as we were going troops seldom wear the regimental clothing that one sees in garrison

towns; the scarlet is thrown aside for a much more serviceable kit, consisting of light brown coat and trousers (very like the Elcho grey of the Volunteers—and our regiment in particular adopted Norfolk jackets), brown leather belts, and “putties,” or woollen bandages for the legs, which, neatly wound round, are warm, and of great use in preventing the legs from the scratching of thorns and brambles; they also serve as a support to the limbs. In looking round at the number of gallant officers in the force, it was astonishing what a number of Victoria Cross men there were, which shows that our Indian officers are at any rate made of the right stuff, and have also plenty of opportunity for distinguishing themselves.

On the night of the 20th November an advance into Afghanistan was decided upon, as the Ameer Shere Ali had refused to answer our ultimatum, and the First Brigade

received orders to cross the Kuram river early on the following morning. Another important order was at the same time published to the effect that a Divisional Field Hospital was to be established at Thall for the reception of any men not able to proceed, and for sick and wounded that might be sent back from the front. The duty of forming this hospital fell to the lot of a young medical officer, who had on that memorable night as assiduous a task as could well be imagined, for he had to superintend the pitching of fourteen large "European privates' tents" in the best order possible (the night, too, was extremely dark), get the sick moved into them, bedding put down, surgical instruments and medicines selected from the different regimental stocks transferred to this Field Hospital, choose a hospital sergeant, and in fact attend at a moment's notice, single-handed, to all the

minutiæ of a hospital, and under the most trying circumstances. To add to this, eighty-seven sick men were put under his medical charge, and when I say that on the morning of the 22nd this hospital was in the most excellent trim and the men as carefully looked after and dieted as though they were in a station at home, I think my readers will quite agree with the opinions of General Roberts and Surgeon-General Allen, the Principal Medical Officer to the Force, when they personally complimented this medical officer upon the result of his exertions. Indeed a more substantial reward would not have been thrown away upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR ADVANCE INTO AFGHANISTAN.

On the morning of the 21st the First Brigade with all their baggage and camp followers crossed the river and encamped about three miles distant on the other side. The next day they completed another march, having met with no opposition whatever, and the few men belonging to the Ameer who had occupied Fort Kappunga were not even seen by them, having, I suppose, previously bolted. I heard afterwards, however, that a child of about three years old was found to be the sole occupant of the fort when our troops entered it, but I did not see the little delinquent, nor have I ever heard since what became of it.

Before the First Brigade commenced their

second march, twenty-five more sick men were sent back to the Thall Hospital, and I noticed that they chiefly belonged to the 8th Regiment. I think General Roberts did quite right to weed his little force as much as possible of all weakly men, but on the other hand it did appear strange that upon the day after they started twenty-five men should have become suddenly unfit to proceed.

As the First Brigade left their encampment the Second crossed the frontier into Afghanistan and took its place. A lieutenant and one company of the 8th King's were left at Thall to protect the hospital. This, to me, appeared a very small contingent, as the Thall neighbourhood was full of cut-throats and armed robbers, and was probably as dangerous a spot as you could find. I did not on that score envy the lieutenant or the surgeon. The news of the fall of Ali Musjid came on the same day, which put

life, spirits, and a warlike ambition into the hearts of the men.

We were of course on rations now, which signified one pound of very tough beef, killed the same day as served out; a pound of potatoes (as long as they were procurable) which, by-the-bye, were awfully bad at times; half a loaf of bread, or, when that could not be had, biscuits, which did not go at all nicely with the beef; and a pinch of rice, sugar, salt, and tea. This for twenty-four hours to a hearty and hard-worked soldier was not too much. The want of butter and milk we felt greatly at first. I may also mention in speaking of our ration, that a "tot," or about a wine glass and a half of rum was procurable daily on payment from the Commissariat Department, and it was wonderful what a liking for that much despised liquor we all took.

From the time we left Thall until we

arrived at the Peiwar Kotal, which place I shall have a better opportunity of describing later on, nothing occurred worth relating.

The forcing of this Kotal, upon which the Ameer had no doubt concentrated the flower of his army, and which we afterwards found to be a position of enormous natural strength, was no doubt a fine affair, and the securing of so important a victory, owing to the flank movement proposed by General Roberts, brought out the finest attributes of that officer, viz., forethought, bravery, and self-reliance. Those critics who saw the Peiwar Kotal afterwards, wondered, and naturally, how it was taken at all by so small a force; in fact, I really believe from my own observations that with a small, but "select," body of British troops, including a couple of batteries of artillery, it could be made almost impregnable. But these Afghans haven't enough heart, and they were

no doubt surprised and panic stricken when attacked in flank as well as in front. I may mention that before the Kotal was taken by our troops on the 2nd December, a flying column was sent out to reconnoitre that position, but had to retire on finding the enemy in force, and one officer, Lieutenant Reid, was badly wounded. Jellalabad had by this time been occupied by the British on the Khyber side, and it was supposed that the best part of Shere Ali's army was already destroyed, so that with the exception of a coming expedition into the Khost country which was talked of, we all looked upon the war as virtually over on this, the Kuram, side, for I may add that most of the Ameer's guns were in our hands.

I had, since leaving Thall, come across a good many Afghans, so that I may as well describe our enemy *en passant*. They were mostly men of good stature, large limbed,

muscular, and square shouldered. Their complexions tawny and a good deal fairer than the native of India. The hair, jet black, is worn long down to the shoulders behind, and they have large beards and moustachios of the fierce order. Certainly the greater number of those I saw were very ugly men, but with a haughty bearing and countenance. On the other hand, a few were remarkably handsome. All the males of the country are what might be termed fighting men—armed to the teeth, and accustomed to the use of firearms and swords. Most of them, too, are daring riders, performing on horseback feats of great skill. The strength of our enemy, therefore, in Afghanistan was not to be reckoned only by the number of the Ameer's regular troops, but also, in a great measure, by the whole male or weapon-carrying population. In this point do these wars with uncivilized peoples differ so

vastly from those carried on in Europe, for in the latter case one does not expect to be denied food and other necessities by the peasantry and non-fighting portion of the country, nor is one in absolute danger of having one's throat cut at night. In Afghanistan, however, everyone was our mortal enemy by race and creed.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DIVERSION.

Now while dwelling upon this point, my readers will excuse my diverting to another, which treats of the character of the Indian natives generally. Much has been said and written about the good and bad qualities of our black servants, so that my opinions must only apply to those with whom I have myself been brought in contact, having been formed by personal observation during a stay of five years in the country. In the first place, I must state that with one or two exceptions, I have always found them honest. Money, of course, is what they like best, and they do their utmost to try and extort it out of you in every way. They likewise have a keen regard for jewellery. By far the better plan

of keeping these two things safely, is to trust your servant with their keeping, and let him see that you give him your confidence ; this gives a tinge of importance to his position, which he is very fond of, and which he is very loth to lose. On the other hand, hide your treasures from him, and he, if he be a thief, will surely endeavour to steal them, and if he be not a thief, the temptation to pilfer will be great to him, because his honour is not trusted, and he, in his own mind, has therefore no character to lose. I think it is most people's experience, that if a native is bent upon robbing you, he will gain his end by some means or other. They are very fond of getting possession of keys, which require being taken special care of in India. Now a native is a born liar, and does not scruple to get himself out of trouble or suit himself to circumstances, by telling the most arrant and barefaced falsehoods. One of the

best points in them is their affection for children and horses, and I have noticed that with regard to the former, they are as fond of their masters' little ones as their own, and no life suits the native taste better than the monotonous one of sitting down in a shady nook with nothing to do but amuse an infant. This they are perfect at. Their respect for European ladies is another bright trait in their character, and most assuredly, like the poet Moore's young lady who travelled the length and breadth of Ireland unmolested, a lady might go unprotected from one end of India to the other without fear of the coloured ones at any rate, and this is a fine ornament in their character, and one that ought to be better appreciated than it is. Many a lady keeps house alone with nought but black servants round her for months, during the husband's absence, perhaps on active service, or on the march, and does so without the

slightest fear of an insult by word or deed. Some of them, too, are faithful to a degree, which was amply proved during the Mutiny, and nothing will please a servant more than to give him or her the sole charge of an invalid, say during a march; and I lately heard of a case where the poor native bearer, who had the care of a sick lady on her way to the hills, in a doolie, trotted along in the hot weather by the side of his master's wife for forty miles in one day! The poor man then fell fainting by the roadside. Dear reader, is this faithfulness, or what is it? Imagine the picture yourself. They say (Europeans say) that the word gratitude is not known or appreciated by the native of India, and they certainly have a very matter-of-fact way of receiving a present from you. A love for monotony is a very characteristic trait in them, and the wretched old man who pulls your punkah so lazily but surely

through the hot weather, prefers that existence to a more busy life. This leads to a fault which is one of the most common to be found in them, and that is an aptitude for getting into a certain groove or routine, and sticking to it under the most varying circumstances. If, for instance, it happened to rain, say for a week, during which time you had given orders to your bearer (valet), to shut a certain window for fear of the rain coming in, he would, more than likely, after the weather had become fine again, go on shutting up the said window until you told him he need not mind doing so any more. In fact the native servant works more as a machine at one's bidding than as a human being with senses, and does not care to think for himself. Take another example. Suppose one is wearing a certain cap every day with a mufti suit (this has happened to myself), your faithful attendant is likely to bring you the same cap,

although you have in the meantime or the next day changed into uniform, especially if you had been wearing the aforesaid cap and mufti suit for any length of time. So that it is to be inferred that the native seldom uses his brain for the benefit of anybody else than himself, and also has a great want of forethought. I also noticed a funny thing in them which I never could exactly put down to dishonesty, although it looks somewhat like it. If you give your servant a shilling (not having smaller change), and tell him to go and buy you something which is to cost sixpence, he will never think of delivering up the change until you ask for it, nor will he spend it. If you give a valuable horse to the care of a Sais (groom) at Calcutta say, and you wished the animal marched for a thousand miles up country to your station, it is a certainty that the horse will arrive at your door safely. And even if you had in the

meantime left the station to which you had ordered the Sais to bring the animal to, and gone goodness knows how far off, the Sais will surely find you out without difficulty and walk up to your door with his salaam in the quietest possible manner, as if he had only come across the road, although he may have traversed Hindostan.

I will now say a few words about a race of people who inhabit our Indian frontier in some parts—a sturdy but treacherous race to wit—I mean the Pathans. People in England often and naturally ask why we employ so many, or any, Pathans in our frontier army—they being obliged in most expeditions of war in which they are employed, to fight against not only their own brothers in religion (and religion is a mighty bond with Asiatics), but against their very blood relations in many instances. In the Jowaki campaign, many a soldier had to fight against his sisters and his

cousins and his aunts without any respect to his feelings. In everyday life we would not set a thief to catch a thief, nor would we expect a soldier to enlist with the prospect before him of having to wage war with his friends and relations, and help to burn down and destroy their homes. Yet this is what the Pathan often has to do without a murmur, and it is a heinous crime for one of these soldiers to make a bolt in the night to his father's home to inform him of the coming destruction of his house the next day. We surely must allow that there should be a certain amount of patriotism even in the most despicable of races, and yet we expect to find these men throwing it away to serve our country and Queen. I ask then, in this Afghan campaign,* why did we persist in sending forward so many Pathan companies to fight, when we

* There were a good many Pathans in the army in Afghanistan, whose religion is akin to that of the Afghan, the ties of which are as firm and binding as those of the Masonic brotherhood.

had abundance of Sikhs and Hindoos to do the work ? Was there not danger in it ? Why, too, do we enlist any Pathans at all into our frontier army, where their places could be taken by their hated countrymen the Sikhs, Ghoorkhas and Poorbies ? These are the men for such work, and the sturdy Pathan might with advantage be sent to do duty in another direction, namely, Bombay and Madras, where the hatred between them and the people they would be living among, would serve to strengthen our hold on these Presidencies. Luckily it is, indeed, that castes prevail in India, or we could not hold the country ! Knowing this, ought we not to make the best use of the fact ? I must in conclusion add that fortunately taking these Pathans as a whole, and considering how their loyalty is often sorely tried, they *are* loyal to us, and when questioning them on the subject they invariably say that “ While they take the

Sahib's salt " (an idiomatic expression meaning while they are in our service and paid by us for the same) " they will remain faithful to the colours." On the other hand, they are not ashamed to add that when we require their services no longer and discharge them, they will in turn, if necessary, fight against us, for their kindred.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREE LETTERS FROM A FRIEND.

HAVING given way to my thoughts a little upon a subject which perhaps is somewhat out of place in a book of this kind, and which I trust my readers will excuse, I will now proceed with events in Afghanistan. After the storming and capture of the Peiwar Kotal, General Roberts and his Brigades lay on their oars a bit, and until the receipt of further orders we endeavoured to make ourselves as comfortable on this mountain top as circumstances would admit. I find a great blank in this portion of my diary, from which it must be inferred that nothing of sufficient interest took place to warrant an entry ; but I received three very interesting letters from my friend the young medical officer who was left in charge of the hospital at Thall, which

I shall insert here. The first, dated December 1st, ran as follows :—

“ MY DEAR OLD CHAP,

“ You can imagine how awfully slow it has been in this beastly place since you all went away, and S—, who was left in command of the small detachment here, has long since learned by heart all the stock of conversation that I am possessed of, which compliment I can return him. As I write, one of the greatest nuisances in this locality—the dust—is being blown playfully into my optics ; in fact, my tent is full of it, clothes covered with it, and my day's rations, which are reposing quietly on the ground beside the bed, flavoured to a nicety by it. And do you know, old fellow, that I have been so hungry at times that I have more than once gone out and begged a bit of chupattie from my servant. However, I mustn't grumble,

for I expect you are even worse off than I am in this respect. Let me see, the day after you left was a Sunday, I think, not a very religious one, the fact being that our blessed Government allows us so little weight for baggage that a Bible or Prayer Book is quite out of the question. The next day the place was enlivened by the sight of a brother medico of the Indian Service, who had been sent up here to look after a native field hospital. He is a huge man, of great calibre, and S— and I didn't at all like the prospect of sharing our meagre rations with him the day he arrived, he being ravenous at the time. It is awfully cold at night, and the days, to spite the nights, are horrid hot, so that my liver feels very cumbersome at times. Just imagine the water in one's basin being turned into a solid block of ice by the morning, in one's sleeping apartment, too, and the thermometer at 90° during the day.

The 21st Punjab Native Infantry arrived here soon after you left, which made the place a little more cheerful. I wonder you didn't send me a message by the heliograph which was established between the advancing force and Thall, but I suppose they won't allow that blessed instrument to be made a medium for scandal. What do you say, my good sir, when I tell you that a post-office tent has been erected in this civilized spot, and a regular system of letter-carrying by mounted postmen instituted! But the worst of it is, that all letters at present are enclosed in *one* bag for the army, and, as the postal authorities did not contemplate anybody at Thall receiving letters, we have at present to gaze fondly on the bag as it passes (but dare not open it), and are obliged to wait until they are sent back to us from headquarters. I suppose those forty men whom I cured and sent on to join their regiments

the other day arrived all right? I shall be getting rid of some more soon, as my object is to try and break up this establishment and get on myself. By the bye, a Scotch parson appeared on the spot to-day on his way to join your Highland regiment up there, and from what I could see, he was anything but comfortable in his mind as to the dangers in front of him, and the present state of affairs in general. Would you believe, too, that the band of the 21st P.N.I. played a selection of music one afternoon for the good of Thall society, but I did not notice any ladies present! There are some of the 5th Punjab Cavalry here now, and their officers are awfully good fellows. I dined with one of them, Major H—, last night, but was obliged, of course, to have a sentry with me 'home,' although it was only a distance of a quarter of a mile! I needn't say, however, that after dusk it is anything but safe to

leave camp. I hear that the indefatigable Jehangeer, the Parsee shopkeeper of Rawul Pindi, is about to form a branch establishment here, for the comfort of the public, I suppose, and oh ! not at all for the good of the said Mr. Jehangeer's pocket ! Indeed, he says he will lose by it, poor chap ! And when I mention that some fellows have already given as much as five rupees (ten shillings) for a pound of rancid butter in a tin, to a philanthropic and itinerant merchant, I am sure you will be surprised. Several convoys of commissariat supplies have been sent on from here to the front, and all of them, I believe, have reached you safely, although a mile or two of camels is nothing out of the way in the formation of a convoy. I will close this epistle now, wishing you every luck.

“Yours ever,

“BOBBY.”

His next letter to me was as follows :—

“Thall, December 10th, 1878.

“DEAR OLD CHAP,

“I hear that one of our convoys has been attacked by Afghans, who, however, bolted when fired upon by the escort, without doing much harm. Lots of ruffians, armed to the teeth, daily pass through our little camp on their way from the Kuram valley, and they look uncommonly as if they are all on the spy. A convoy of 1,200 camels leaves here to-morrow for the front, and a small force is to start for Hazir Pir, a village between this and Kuram (as you know) at the same time, to reconnoitre. This force is to consist of 50 sabres of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, who are stationed about half-a-mile from our camp on the Kohât side, two mountain guns, and two companies of the 21st P.N.I., the whole under the command of Colonel Ben Williams,

of the 5th P.C. One or two big native festivals take place this week, during which time whoever kills a white man will surely go straight to heaven when he dies, so that we rather expect some rows about here shortly, especially as the surrounding tribes are anything but friendly. The telegraph wire which has been laid down between Kohât and Thall was cut to-day, and all communications with India proper have to be carried now by couriers and escort, who have (I should imagine) a rather exciting if not to say dangerous time of it; in fact, if you will excuse a joke during war time, letter-carrying is a dangerous 'post' just now! I hear that another Regiment, the 28th Punjab Native Infantry, is hurrying on here from down country by forced marches, and as I know the Colonel of them very well, I am very glad. By the bye, the heliograph appears to have answered capitally on the Khyber side, for by

its means I understand that a telegram was flashed from Ali Musjid to Peshawur on the fall of the former place—

“ ‘ Ali Musjid is in rags.’ ”

“ We may therefore expect great things from this looking-glass instrument of communication. The great Mussulman or Id festival came off on the 5th of this month, by the bye, and passed off peaceably, notwithstanding that several shots were fired into camp during the night. No one was hit, and no attack upon us made. You see, all the commissariat stores are kept here now, and looting on the part of the tribes round about would be very profitable to the beggars; and after to-morrow our garrison will only consist of 50 native cavalry men, two mountain guns, and 100 infantry. On the 7th I sent off 26 more men from hospital fit for duty. There is a rumour about here

that the Ameer of Cabul has bolted from his capital, and that his faithful subjects are engaged busily in looting, but I expect this is only a sham. Yesterday a gang of prisoners were sent into Thall, captured, I believe, by a small force in your direction. They brought in news that the Ameer had gone to Balk, and that there is at the present moment no opposition between our troops and Cabul. I forgot to tell you that the glorious news of your victory at the Peiwar Kotal came a few days ago, and I was very sorry to hear of Kelso's and Anderson's deaths.

“ Ever yours,

“ BOBBY.”

His next letter was in this wise :—

“ Thall, December 17th, 1878.

“ DEAR OLD BOY,

“ As I may be leaving this place shortly, I will just write a few lines to tell you what has been going on since the

10th, the date, I think, of my last letter. Well, on that very night 28 camels were stolen from us, and the party that went out to try and discover any traces of them came back with two of the unfortunate camel drivers bound together and cut about the face. These men, it appears, had been kidnapped with their camels. The next day, however, most of the animals, strange to say, were found. The telegraph wire has been cut again, and, as usual, the offenders cannot be discovered. A horrid tragedy occurred on the 11th which I must tell you of, and it makes my blood boil when I think of the savage cruelty of these brutes around us. Three of the 5th Punjab Cavalry grass cutters went out into the jungle, as usual, to get grass for their masters' horses, and were foully murdered. Their bodies were found hacked to pieces and placed in three heaps of human remains

on the ground. After the mutilated bodies were brought into camp, I went down to see them, and it *was* a horrid sight, I can tell you, for there were the poor fellows' fingers hacked off, evidently while holding up their hands for mercy; one of their heads was almost severed (by a cut behind) from the trunk, the ears slashed off, and the face cut all over. Another had the nape of his neck and base of skull cut half through, the top of the spine severed, and the knee joints opened with huge wounds. When I gazed upon this picture of brutality, my hand, old boy, instinctively grasped my revolver, and I felt that I should like to go at once and shoot the first Afghan or Pathan I met. I now quite understand the feelings of the British soldier, who, I believe, shot three Sepoys dead after visiting the Cawnpore Memorial. But enough of this subject. I was delighted to hear that stalwart old John

Cook, of the Ghoorkhas, has been recommended for the Victoria Cross. I always thought him a fine fellow. Another of our convoys was fired upon yesterday ; I believe by some tribes belonging to a district near here, called Khost, and as these gentlemen have been giving a good deal of trouble lately, I fancy there is some truth in the rumours which are flying about to the effect that an expedition to that country will shortly take place. By the bye, a fellow has just informed me that the village near which the three grass-cutters were murdered has been fined 400 rupees and another one 200 rupees for cutting the telegraph wires. I should propose rather the razing of the said villages to the ground, but the old policy of Great Britain : ' We will never use force of arms where money will do,' seems dominant. It does not, however, pay always, eh, old boy ? especially with uncivilized barbarians. I

never was so delighted in my life as when I received an order yesterday that my hospital was to be broken up immediately, the reason of this being that it is now too far away from the scene of warlike operations. S— and his detachment returned to Kohât this morning, so I suppose I shall now be sent on, and hope to see you ere long. Now don't laugh when I say that dull and wretched as my stay here as been, do you know I felt just a wee bit down in the mouth when S— said good-bye to me to-day, and nothing was left of him but the earthy mound that helped to keep the rain out of his tent. Everything looks very bare now, the hospital tents are *hors de combat* and the ground uncovered. S— and I often tried to be jolly in our little house, and consoled ourselves over a glass of rum and water on many a cold night. Before closing this letter, I must tell you that I hear that Russia has re-

fused any help to the Ameer, who has fled in that direction, and it's just like the Ruskies, as the niggers call them. Put not your faith in Russian princes! I must also tell you that Thall is still advancing greatly in civilization, for a dâk bungalow tent has been just put up for the convenience of fellows passing through, and an old fossil of a cook put in charge of it. I met to-day, for the first time, a great native swell, and supposed loyal friend to the Government, in the shape of a certain Mahomet Hyat Khan, who is on his way to join General Roberts, as Native Political Officer. His manners are those of a perfect gentleman; he speaks our language fluently, and is quite the most Englishified blackman I have ever met; he is also a Companion of the Star of India. We made friends at once. As I write, somebody has just popped in to tell me that the telegraph wire has been cut again, and on both

sides this time; also, that Power, of the Ghorkhas, and Goad, of the Transport, have both died of their wounds, poor chaps. He also showed me one of the Afghan Artillerymen's helmets, which is quite a swagger arrangement, with silver spike and chain, etc. The temperature at night now in one's tent is 28°—cheerful, eh! So long, old boy, till we meet.

“Yours,

“BOBBY.”

CHAPTER XV.

AT HAZIR PIR.

TOWARDS the end of December I began to set to work to try and get an appointment of sorts in the coming Khost expedition, for some fighting was expected with the tribes in that direction, namely, the Mangals and Waziris. In this I was successful, and received my orders to march down from the Peiwar Kotal as far as Hazir Pir to take up my post, as the expedition was to start from that place. I therefore packed up my traps as soon as possible and accompanied a convoy to Hazir Pir, arriving there on the evening of the 29th. I am sorry to say that some native followers were murdered on the way down, and it was always a wonder to me, knowing the stealth and cunning propensities

of the wily Afghan, that more of these unfortunate creatures were not cut up, for they straggle about so carelessly and wander away in such a "regardless-of-danger" style from the convoys on the march that they might often be plundered and murdered ten times over before help could reach them. It is, indeed, not an uncommon thing at all to see two or three of them slipping on one side into the long grass and out of sight of their friends, to have a quiet "hubble-bubble." The two officers who came down in charge of the convoy with me had, like myself, drawn rations in advance (this is always done when one starts on a march) for the number of days we would be travelling. But somehow or other we got out of our reckoning and made such a sad mistake that we found ourselves a day short of food. We were, therefore, obliged to do without it for twenty-four hours. Another day on this same march

I found the meat so high after I had cooked it that it could not be eaten, and as I had mixed my split peas (served out instead of potatoes) and rice with it, in the form of stew, I was reduced to a meal of bread and water. However, we got to Hazir Pir all right on the third day. The camp there was in constant danger of being attacked, and murders occurred almost as frequently as shots were fired at night. Strong pickets were therefore posted all around in little shelter trenches. The cold at Hazir Pir was intense, the temperature falling to 13° at night in one's tent, which was anything but comfortable. A wing of the 72nd Highlanders arrived on the same day that I did, to form a part of the column for Khost, and a wing of the 8th King's came in to garrison Hazir Pir during their absence. We heard that the Ameer of Cabul had decamped, and that his son, Yakoob Khan, who was govern-

ing the country in his stead, had no intention of coming to terms with us. Orders were issued for the advance into Khost to take place on Thursday, the 2nd January, 1879, and great differences of opinion were prevailing as to what kind of a country we were going to, as, I believe, no European had ever been in Khost before; also, whether we should have any fighting, the general opinion being that we should; not, perhaps, with the Khostis themselves, but with the mountainous and warlike tribes who live on one side of the Khost valley. I mentioned before that murders and plunderings were the order of the day, so a gallows was soon erected in a prominent place in front of the camp and within sight of our enemies who inhabited the opposite hills. It was a very primitive looking gallows, but I dare say would answer its purpose admirably. At that moment we had five ruffians in camp, who had been

caught red-handed, and were doomed to be the first to adorn the aforesaid gallows. A sentry had moreover been shot at Thall; in fact the whole length and breadth of the unfortunate country was in a very unsatisfactory and bloodthirsty state, and most unsafe to go about in. On the 31st December four of the prisoners above mentioned were hanged, and the fifth, who was proved to be a milder offender, was doomed to be an eye-witness of the scene, and then stripped and horsewhipped. It was indeed a horrible sight; there stood the gallows, an unfinished one surely, but looking, perhaps, more grim in its simplicity than would a better made one. In front and beneath the gallows were dug graves for the reception of the culprits, in fact they were actually being made under their very eyes, and four nooses hung from the cross-bar of the ghastly erection. A portion of every regiment in camp had to

parade and attend the scene with loaded rifles ready for any disturbance that might occur. This proved to be quite necessary, for soon the hills opposite were swarmed with Afghans who had come to witness the destruction of their kinsmen. Now a good many of the native soldiers who were present on duty were Pathans, and consequently of the same religion as the men about to be hanged. I thought it therefore, rather an anxious moment, for religion, as I have said before, is their greatest tie and incentive, and who could tell whether at such a climax as was about to arrive these Pathan soldiers of ours would not turn round and fire upon the small body of Englishmen present, especially when their deepest sympathies were about to be appealed to by the cries of their brethren who were so soon to meet death. The four culprits walked steadily up the planks leading to and resting upon the

stage of the gallows, and having uttered prayers to "Allah," and avenging threats to their white enemies around, put their heads calmly into the nooses. Just before doing this I noticed that one of them turned round and addressed a few words, evidently of appeal, to the Pathan soldiers present. Only one of the four appeared at all nervous, and his limbs shook again! All was soon ready, and at a given signal the Provost Sergeant pushed away the board on which they were standing and the four men dropped! But alas! this did not end so terrible a scene, for as the plank was pushed away, the strain on the supporting beam caused one end of it to give way with a crash! From this mishap two of the culprits only were hanged, for the other two actually got up and staggered about, and midst struggling and groaning were brained by pistol shots from the Provost Sergeant, and put out of pain and this world.

It was a heart-rending moment for the few Englishmen present, and as the act was finished the clouds darkened over the scene, and the sun, which a moment before had been shining brightly, suddenly appeared to lose its brightness. Thus ended the year! and may God have mercy upon these four men's souls! I may further mention that the fifth offender, who was made to look on at this scene, was afterwards stripped naked, tied to one of the poles of the gallows, and received a number of lashes. He was then escorted by a couple of native soldiers to the hills opposite and sent about his business. When I returned to my tent, a messenger handed me another letter (which he said had been given him three days ago, but he couldn't for the life of him find me or my tent) from my friend the doctor, who, I found, had left Thall, and was actually at Hazir Pir on the morning of the 28th, the

very day before I arrived, but had been ordered back again on the same day with some sick and wounded bound for Kohât. "How provoking," I thought. However, the dear old fellow's letter was most welcome to me, and helped to cheer me up after the scene I have just described. I will therefore insert it :—

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM THE DOCTOR.

“ Hazir Pir, December 28th.

“ DEAR OLD BOY,

“ You will see by the above address that I have been travelling of late, and as I am here for a few hours to-day, I thought I would just scribble off a few lines to let you know what I have been doing since you last heard of me. I may mention that I will give this letter to a messenger (who by the way is very stupid) to hand over to you, should you be in this direction soon, and I trust you will get it all right.

“ Well, I started on the 23rd for the front, thank goodness, hoping in my heart and soul that all the fighting was not yet over in your part of the world. I thought

if I could only reach General Roberts before he went on the Khost expedition I should certainly apply for leave to go with him, and hoped you would do the same. I have been travelling since the 23rd with a convoy of seven hundred camels carrying up provisions, etc., and as Eyre—you remember him—was the transport officer with us, and three other fellows I knew very well, also accompanied, it wasn't so slow a journey as it might otherwise have been. Just fancy, we only had seventy Sepoys to guard the convoy, and I believe we were very lucky to get even that many. It really seems very little when you consider the length of the line of camels going along in single file. It was getting dark as we left Thall, but Eyre, with great forethought, suggested to me that it was advisable to get something in the shape of materials for a Christmas pudding, especially as we should not have another opportunity

of buying anything of the kind, and there is no doubt, old boy, that a jolly hot pudding, even of doubtful composition, greatly enhances the pleasures of one's Christmas Day, which, forsooth, we were about to spend while on the march. We therefore consulted together, and inspected the three solitary tents in the place which were set apart for the sale of 'kishmish' (raisins), sugar candy, and other delicacies such as natives appear almost to subsist upon. Having bought an assortment which we considered would be the correct thing for contaminating the aforementioned pudding, we proceeded. On the road I noticed any number of camels in different stages of 'dying' and decomposition, and surrounded by hungry looking vultures, ravens, and jackals, which were picking the poor brutes' eyes out before they were half dead. It appears that a great many camels are succumbing to the cold,

hard work, and starvation. I even noticed a few of them so weak that in crossing the Kuram river they were washed off their legs by the stream. The bridge, by the bye, which has been thrown across the said river, is not strong enough to allow of baggage animals to cross.

“ Our first night we ‘shook down’ in Fort Kappyunga, which is a rather dilapidated building of the mud and stone order. The entrance to it consists of a high archway furnished with huge swinging doors which close to with a ghostly sound ! This leads to a square courtyard, around which are built small houses, or I might call them quarters for the occupants of the fort. These little mud enclosures had the only recommendation of keeping out the rain and wind to a small degree, and judging from the dirty and stinking condition that they were in, I should say they had been occupied last,

by a very low class of ruffian as well as by cattle. However, shelter of any kind was most acceptable to us, and saved us the bother of pitching our tents, which, no doubt, is a nuisance when it has to be done every blessed day. At each corner of Fort Kappunga is a round tower, which, with its openings carefully enlarged on the inner side (like civilized ones are), serves as a look out, and this is no doubt where the Afghan sentries were posted. We selected one apartment, or rather compartment, for our mutual night's rest; it was a corner one, and appeared on account of its comparative snug look to have been occupied oftener and later than the others. The black and scorched condition of the large beams too, which formed the roof, gave evidence of fires having been freely burned therein, which custom we kept up, for with the aid of brambles, sticks, and pats of manure such as the natives use

for their fires, we soon had a fine blaze nearly up to the ceiling. One of the servants, who was *par excellence* chief cook, then mustered our united rations (I don't mean put 'mustard' on them!), and prepared to make what a nigger always can make, 'Irish es-tew.' When all was ready for our frugal repast we made down our beds on the damp earthen floor, took our seats thereon, and lay to. A little spirituous liquor would no doubt have done wonders as well as kept out the cold, but it wasn't to be, I said, and so we smacked our lips in fond memory! 'To bed,' solemnly exclaimed Eyre the moment we had swallowed the last mouthful. 'To earth' would be far more appropriate, I rejoined. We turned in, and slept soundly the first night in the Ameer's country. We were awoke at daybreak by the murmurings of the weary camels and the enticing expressions of the wily ones trying to load them.

and urge them onward. We marched at 9.30, and did eight miles, arriving in good time at a place called Ahmed Shāma—not a place, indeed, as the signification goes at home, but simply because one halts there. At these halting spots, which are generally (if possible) selected where shelter, however rude, can be obtained, a small detachment of Native Cavalry is posted to keep the road and accompany officers to and fro; they, therefore, remind one of oases in the desert-like march or a haven of comparative safety for convoys to put up in. I forgot to mention that soon after leaving Thall, a further contingent of two hundred camels was tacked on to us, making the total up to nine hundred, and our escort was consequently more spread out than ever. An attack upon us would, I imagine, have been pretty fatal. You fellows who go up to the front with your regiments and brigades don't know

what it is to be marching along with a badly defended convoy, in fact only protected here and there by a black soldier, who is ten to one of the same caste as the enemy.

“ We had the good luck again to be able to shake down in another mud fort, but dirtier, if possible, than the last. A little variety was occasioned by the sight of Elliot’s (of the commissariat) face; he was passing through on his way to Thall, and was very pleased to meet old friends. Some small excitement also attended the purchase made by one of our fellows of an Afghan flint-lock pistol. It was already loaded, but there wasn’t one of us who had the pluck to fire the seedy-looking old arrangement off, so we were obliged to get the former owner to do so, and he succeeded.

“ On the 25th, Christmas Day, we marched another eight miles over a dangerous road, and one pass we had to go through was

simply (I thought) made to order for the concealment of any ruffians who might wish to waylay us. We however took every precaution in placing our escorts as advantageously as possible, and had the good fortune to get to the next post (Jelemi) unmolested. A good many of our camels dropped off that day, unable to proceed any farther, and I don't know a sadder picture than to see a camel driver quietly casting the load off a dead-beat camel and letting him go adrift to die in the jungle; and then to see the poor animal trotting away in what appears freedom to him, but which really means the probability of dying the same night. Would you believe, too, that the vultures actually have their greedy eyes and hearts on straggling camels long before they are dead!

We found young Montgomery with a detachment of the 28th Native Infantry

at Jelemi, keeping the road open, so that now there were six of us to contribute to the keeping of old Christmas Day. Hurrah, old boy! The more the merrier, say I. Our dinner, or rather meal, was to be very grand, not to say sumptuous. A few fish of the minnow or tittlebat tribe had been caught in the Kuram river (which flows along the whole march) by Eyre; our joint rations of beef were to be consigned to the largest stew-pot in camp, owned by a native, God bless him! And what with rice, potatoes (this time), stale chillies, &c., &c., beef *a la mode*, or 'all blaze,' was bound to be the result. Then again, the ingredients for the pudding, which we had carried with us all the way from Thall, were to be turned to a good account.

"At an early hour in the afternoon I observed that Eyre was elbow deep in the mysteries of plum dough, kneading away quite business-like (and as if he had been at it all his

life), until the mass was in a suitable condition for tying up. For this purpose my largest handkerchief was taken. All was ready by six o'clock in the evening, and dinner fit for serving up. Montgomery produced without a word of warning, which nearly took our breaths away and caused one of the fellows to give a long low whistle, *a whole bottle of rum*. Yes, I repeat a *whole bottle*, which I heard afterwards he had saved up in the event of meeting a friend in distress at any time. We set to with a will at the 'all blaze' stew, and then we smacked our lips at the thought of pudding time. Presently it came, but nursed tenderly, like a new-born babe, by a curly Pathan, who had both his black hands spread out carefully beneath it, and accompanied by a painful expression of countenance. His knees, forsooth, were bent as he came gingerly in. Oh my! I thought I should have burst.

‘What the devil are you doing?’ roared Eyre, in Hindustani, to the Sepoy. The secret was soon out, for crumbs began to fall to the ground, and half the pudding was sprinkled about the place.

“The poor Pathan explained that it took him ten minutes to get it out of the pot, to which it had evidently stuck fast! We enjoyed ourselves immensely nevertheless, drank to the health of absent friends, and went to bed as merry as sand-boys. You know I was always a bit of a poet, so I scribbled a few verses on this occasion, which I will send you another time.

“On the 26th we arrived at Hazir Pir Ziarât, where I found that a small garrison had been formed, namely, the 21st P.N.I., some of the 5th P.C., and a couple of mountain guns. Another regiment, the 5th P.I., we met on their way with sick and wounded

from Kuram to Kohât. This regiment, a very fine one by the way, had under its charge a lot of prisoners of the 29th P.N.I., who it appears had acted treasonably at the Peiwar Kotal affair. They were all sitting in a long tent when I saw them, guarded by Sikhs, who had their rifles loaded with buck-shot and at full cock. I also noticed a stalwart Sikh walking up and down in front of them with a stout tent-peg in his hand, ready to give the first fellow who spoke a crack on the head. Just before we arrived at Hazir Pir we came across a great many villages, all small and invariably enclosed by a four-sided wall, giving the appearance of a fort to them, especially in the distance. The inhabitants seemed somewhat pleased to see us, as of course we treated them in the most friendly manner possible and gave them the best prices for necessary supplies.

“The men about here wear a conical cap,

generally of scarlet or blue woollen stuff, and wear their hair very long behind. Towards evening I noticed far in the distance, on the top of a mountain apparently some three or four thousand feet high, an enormous fire burning, which was supposed to be a signal from one tribe to another that an attack was contemplated. That night, however, the fire gradually became so large that it must have been the jungle ablaze. A shot fired into camp at dinner-time astonished us, but the sentries didn't take much notice of it. All the guns, carriages, and drums, &c., taken at the Peiwar Kotal passed us on the road the same day; they were being sent, I suppose, to India. Poor old F——, the bandmaster, also came tearing along on a very refractory mule, wending his way down country. Also the Quartermaster turned up; he too appeared to have managed his little leave, which means sloping

off to see wives and children, or, as we call it, 'going to 'buy tooth-powder.' Anything, you know, for an excuse, old boy!

"By the bye, there are any amount of graves in this part of the country, and I should say, judging from the fact, that this district had in former years been far more populated than it is now. It is becoming so infernally cold now, that goodness only knows where the temperature goes to at night!

"On the 27th we marched ten miles, and when we had accomplished about half that distance, as I was riding lazily along with two of the fellows (Eyre had gone right ahead to look for game of sorts), a Sepoy, a sergeant, and a bugler being just ahead of us, we suddenly came in sight of about thirty of the most treacherous-looking Afghans you could possibly set eyes upon. They were armed to the teeth, and came along with a jaunty, and I might say defiant

air. I don't mind confessing it, old chap, but I *did* think, and so did the two fellows with me, that our time had come at last, and that we should have to fight for it. There we were, six able-bodied men to be sure, but far away from any help, the nearest Sepoy to us (except the two and the bugler) being some 400 yards off, and out of sight too, as they had turned a corner in the road. I therefore thought it was all U.P. The beggars made a kind of semi-halt as they neared us, and although they looked like firing on us, appeared to hesitate a little. This I took advantage of, and having drawn my revolver, which was loaded in all five chambers, turned to Captain S—, who was beside me, and said, 'For God's sake, tell the bugler, or let me tell him, to sound the 'halt,' and some of the men in front will hear it.' This was our best chance, and it answered, for no sooner had the last note of

the 'halt' re-echoed through the still air than four more Sepoys came doubling back towards us. The wily Afghans saw and evidently understood this manœuvre too, and quietly went on their way, looking behind them several times. The thing was all done in a moment, but it was long enough to make us remember the little adventure for some time. Soon after we had passed these fellows, who should we meet but a Battery of Horse Artillery and a squadron of the 10th Hussars, with several Staff Officers, all on their way back to Hazir Pir prior to the Khost expedition. I was then and there informed that the Kuram force had been broken up, and that if I wanted an appointment in the coming expedition I had better return to Hazir Pir with them, as Head Quarters would in future be stationed there. This I did on the next day, the 28th, but I no sooner arrived there than I found I came in

(unfortunately) just in the nick of time to accompany some more sick back to Kohât. This was heartrending, as I had not only been building upon the hope of seeing service in Khost, but thought I should have at last an opportunity of seeing you, old boy. So good-bye, and I hope you'll get this letter all right.

“Ever yours,

“BOBBY.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ADVANCE INTO KHOST.

ON the same night as the four Afghans were hanged—New Year's Eve—I was awakened by the sounds of the bagpipes and drums of the Highland Regiment in camp. They were, in fact, as they are wont to, keeping New Year's Eve, and the lusty shouts of the Scotsmen could be heard loud in the night silence. They were further amusing themselves by parading through the camp lines up and down, up and down, to the tunes of those glorious old national songs that were absolutely invented for nothing else but bagpipes—at least, "Sandy" thinks so, and that's all right! I don't think one could have come to a decent estimation as to the number of "quakes" drunk, nor to the number of times "No heel taps" was shouted during the evening. But the Highlanders, from

every appearance, thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and, as De Browne would say, "managed to get outside a fair quantity of their national beverage." On the 2nd January the advance into Khost took place, and I may here give the composition of the force detailed for the expedition, with the names of the principal officers:—

Major-General Roberts, V.C., commanding.

Col. Waterfield and Mahomet Hyat Khan, Political Officers.

Major Collett, Assistant Quartermaster-General.

Major Galbraith, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Dep. Surgeon-General Allen, C.B., Principal Medical Officer.

Col. Hugh Gough, V.C., 12th B.C., commanding Cavalry.

Lieut. Brabazon, 10th Hussars, Brigade Major of Cavalry.

Col. Lindsay, R.A., commanding Artillery.

Captain Badcock,	}	Commissariat Department.
Lieut. Elliott,		

The Revd. Adams, Chaplain.

Capt. Pretymann, R.A.,	}	A.D.C.'s
Lieut. Chamberlain, Central		to
India Horse		Gen. Roberts.

Col. Barry Drew, 8th King's, Brigadier General.

Capt. Scott, V.C., Brigade Major.

Captain Barstow, 72nd Highlanders, and Lieut.-Colonel the Honble. Villiers, Grenadier Guards, &c., also accompanied the expedition in Staff employ. I must also mention that the postal arrangements were admirably carried out by Mr. Van Someren, who managed the same under great difficulties throughout the campaign. The telegraph department was well represented by Mr. Josephs, who worked with great zeal.

The force, small in number, but efficient and very compact, was composed as follows :—

One Squadron (100 men) 10th Hussars—Major Bulkeley C.O.

Three Troops 5th Punjab Cavalry—Major Ben Williams C.O.

Nos. 1 and 2 Mountain Batteries—Captains Morgan and McSwiney.

One Wing 72nd Highlanders—Col. Clarke.

21st Punjab Native Infantry—Major Collis.

28th Punjab Native Infantry—Col. Hudson.

The *reveillé* sounded at 7 a.m., and the

troops began to move off the ground at 8.30. The Hussars formed the advance guard of the column, and were followed by the 21st P.N.I. Next came No. 1 Mountain Battery, and then the baggage and commissariat supplies, flanked by two troops of the 5th P. Cavalry. No. 2 Mountain Battery followed next, then the 72nd Highlanders, 28th P.N.I., and lastly a troop of the 5th P. Cavalry. As we marched off, videttes were thrown out away over the hills on either side, and soon after starting, about a hundred villagers from round about came to meet us and were civil enough to show us the way; whether to danger or glory we knew not. Of course we had guides with us, but still were glad to get any information about such a wild and unknown country, as no white face had ever before disturbed the tranquillity of this part of the world. We were, too, on the alert in the event of a warlike reception. We

marched about ten miles on the first day and then came in sight of three or four villages at a place called Jāgī-Maidān. Here we pitched our camp. The cold we found intense, even more so than at Hazir Pir. From my tent the Peiwar Kotal was quite visible, and as far as I could judge, we were about parallel to Kuram Fort. The Jāgī-Maidān villagers were very obstinate about giving us supplies in the form of grass and other necessaries, and after a good deal of what appeared concession on their parts, they let us have what we wanted, but at absurdly high prices. We passed through great quantities of elephant grass on this first day's march, which grows to about twelve feet high and is very thick and strong. Another thing I noticed was, the number of huge fires on the sides of neighbouring hills; I believe the natives of this part of the world kindle them in order to make the grass grow

well afterwards. To see a whole mountain ablaze like this at night looks very grand, and sometimes far away in the sky line, a mountain top some seven or eight thousand feet high, looks like a huge star. On the 3rd, the order of marching was a little altered, but the 10th Hussars still formed the advance guard. Soon after starting we descended a very steep hill with no apparent road to guide us, and after a great deal of slipping about upon this smooth decline and afterwards over huge boulders, rocks, and small ice-covered ravines, we came on to the level again. The ice, I may mention, was five or six inches thick, as it lay along the roadside and in the nullahs, and the poor horses and baggage animals had a very rough time of it. We soon commenced to ascend range after range of rocky hills, over the most terrible road I have ever seen, and I believe, ever shall see, and how the horses got through

some of the stony ravines, which were so narrow that we were obliged to go in single file, is still a marvel to me. The way the poor brutes slipped about was dreadful, and any harassing that day on the part of the enemy would, I think, have been very disastrous. No Horse Artillery, luckily, accompanied the force; had they done so, they would have been obliged to go back. As it was, pioneers had to proceed in front of the column the whole way to pick, break, and blast the rocks as best they could, in order to make the track passable. The camels were indeed objects of pity, and their "poor feet" must have suffered terribly. The little mountain guns carried by their sturdy mules travelled perfectly and from time to time during the march to Khost, whenever space would admit the halt would sound, and the words "action front" be given to the battery. In an instant down came the tiny guns from

the mules' backs, the carriages fixed like a flash of lightning, and the battery in the required position in about ten seconds. We came among some fine trees on the way, such as one sees at home, and I noticed that a little piece of mistletoe, which was hidden away among the leaves in a very shy manner, was spied out by the men as they went gaily along. The dwarf palm covered all the hills thickly as the heather does in England. On arriving at the summit of the last hill, a beautiful view of the Khost Valley lay beneath us, which contrasted well with the neighbouring mountains. The valley, indeed, looked very snug and peaceful. We next came upon some clear trout streams, and as we halted to allow the baggage to come up, I saw the soldiers catch a good many fish with their hands. As we descended into the valley, signs of agriculture became very apparent, and the whole country before us

appeared as flat as a pancake, and a good deal of it cultivated. Rice, it appears, is grown plentifully in the Khost district, and the inhabitants lay out the ground in tiers one below the other, so that it can be well supplied with water by a stream running along the border of each tier. Water, too, is evidently abundant, and as far as I could judge, the Khost country would be a great acquisition should we think of annexing it, and is by far the most fertile spot I saw in Afghanistan. We halted at a place called Bākh, on a nice open plain, with villages and cultivated land all around us. The villagers came in shortly after we arrived with grass, eggs, and a few fowls, but the prices they asked were so enormous that Tommy Atkins was unwilling to "part" even for a fat *murghi* (fowl). These high prices were, I believe, mainly due to our own political people, who endeavoured to show every un-

necessary kindness to all our enemies, and I suppose allowed them to ask what they liked for their goods. This is absurd, and there is no doubt that Napoleon or Wellington would not have been so tender-hearted. Kindness to a proper degree is all right, but when it comes to not being able to get necessities, in an enemy's country, at a reasonable price, it is quite a question, I think, whether force should not be used. I saw some lovely fair children at Bâkh, and all the inhabitants wore red about their dress. Hundreds of armed horsemen and village chiefs came in to interview the General, and I presume received handsome presents for their trouble. *Apropos* of this, I once heard a native say that our frontier relations were kept secure by holding a sweet in one hand and a sword in the other; if they would not take the former, they would get the latter. Although we only marched nine miles on the

3rd, owing to the bad road, our advance guard did not get in till about four o'clock in the afternoon, and we had started in the early morning. It was therefore dark and cold before our tents were pitched and we were able to get any food. I may remark, too, that the camels carrying commissariat stores and baggage were unable to get into camp at all, and were obliged to halt about four miles short of it, where a portion of the force, namely, the 21st P.N.I., one mountain battery, and some of the 5th Cavalry, remained to look after them. On the next day, the 4th, we were obliged to halt owing to the "done up" condition of the baggage animals, and to allow of the convoy and troops which had been left behind the evening before to come up. When these all arrived, which was about noon, the camels looked totally unfit to go another step, and a good many of them died the same night.

On the morning of the 5th (Sunday), a soldier of the 28th P.N. Infantry, was murdered and his body cut to pieces. It appears that at the time of his death, he was not a hundred yards from our sentries, and he must have been suddenly set upon from behind and killed instantaneously, for not even a shout was heard by anyone. It can be easily understood then that one did not lie down at night with any degree of comfort, nor with that lazy and delicious feeling of safety which helps to give us sleep in our comfortable beds at home, and it was a positive luxury to look forward to the fact of some day being able to lie down without any fear of having your throat cut before day-break. We marched at 8.45 the same morning, and only completed seven miles. The ground was quite flat and very boggy, and a great many horses fell and were unable to regain their footing for some time in the

marshy ground. I saw, indeed, two or three horses with their riders sink suddenly down for three or four feet, and have the greatest difficulty in getting up again; for no sooner did the poor animals get a foot out than down they went again deeper than ever. As we got to the end of our march we came towards a hillock, on which were several villages, all enclosed by walls built rectangularly, the average length and breadth of them appearing to be about one hundred by fifty yards. A village, therefore, in this part of the world, is a very small affair, and whether *each* belongs to a family or a number of families I could not discover. As we approached the hillock, hundreds of armed villagers poured out upon the scene, looking very much as if they were about to dispute our advance; and for a moment, I must say, my heart beat rather strongly at the idea of a fight, especially when the order was given to halt,

and the mountain guns to unlimber, &c. We were, however, allowed to pass on unmolested. Without doubt, the inhabitants of these villages were the most cut-throat, fierce, villanous, dirty, and ugly-looking lot of creatures I have ever set eyes upon. The women squatted on the walls, and the men were very silent, many of them biting their nails and looking dumbfounded as well as "daggers" as we marched past them. This can easily be understood when you come to consider that they had never even set eyes upon a white face before, much less the glittering array of our soldiers' garbs, and the mountain batteries, &c. ; and when the band of the 21st struck up with all its might some lively tune, which echoed again through the village walls, their astonishment, not to say fright, was complete, and I noticed them quietly backing away, looking terrified. Perhaps they thought they were going to be

blown up. In a short time, however, one nudged the other as much as to say, "What are you frightened at, you fool?" And they began to gain confidence. My little terrier caused the greatest amount of interest to them, and they all thought it was, and called it, a *geeda* (jackal). All the dogs in that part of the world, by the bye, were alike, and resembled wolves of yellowish colour; they were very fierce too, and continually barking from the tops of the village walls, where they evidently kept watch.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE MEET THE GOVERNOR OF KHOST AND ACCOMPANY HIM TO HIS CAPITAL.

AFTER we reached our camping ground, who should turn up in gorgeous attire, but the Governor of Khost himself, who promptly had an audience of the General, or a *durbâr* as it is called in India. The Governor looked civil and good-natured, and evidently understood that we were about to visit his country. We were still some sixteen miles from his capital, which is called Mattûn, and contained the residence of the said Governor. From information which I was enabled to gather, this gentleman governed the whole Khost district and acted in that capacity for the Ameer. I noticed a very pretty Turcoman horse that was led just

behind him as he entered our camp, and this he had brought as a present to General Roberts, but the latter politely refused the gift. We expected to arrive at Mattūn the following day, but had a very nasty march in front of us and with every chance, it was believed, of being attacked by the Mangals, whose mountainous territory we should be obliged to go very near to. Indeed, we had to pass through a very narrow defile which ran between a couple of their hills. Every precaution, therefore, was necessary. There was a shave going about camp that the Waziris, who also lived pretty adjacent to us, were about to make a raid upon Dera Ishmael Khān, one of our Indian frontier stations. If that were the case we would have an opportunity of punishing them on our way back from Khost, which was to be by another route.

On the morning of the 6th we started

for Mattūn, and I am happy to say got through the Mangal defile all right. Of course outlying pickets had been posted over the hills in front of us the night before, and as we advanced each side was lined by men of the 28th N. Infantry. The country was too steep and rocky for cavalry videttes, or else they are generally employed for such purposes. Going through a narrow defile, with numerous twists and turns in it, gives such a capital opportunity for a mountainous enemy (commanding you on either side) to attack, especially if the defile be narrow, as it was on this occasion. Add to this the straggling manner in which different parts of a column sometimes march, and the great difficulty there is in keeping the line intact, owing to the fact that some regiments move faster than others, and that baggage and animals travel very slowly over bad ground, and it will easily be understood

why, as in this instance, the strictest precautions were necessary. After marching five miles, the Governor of Khost made his appearance again, and turned back with the column. He was this time accompanied by a sort of Prime Minister, dressed in light blue, and an escort of *very* Irregular Cavalry. They all wore oval Astrakan caps. As we came in sight of Mattūn our force was halted, and General Roberts, with his Political Officers, staff, and an escort of the 10th Hussars, accompanied by the Governor and his retinue, galloped on to inspect the *chawnee* or cantonment. On arrival there, a kind of impromptu *durbār* was held, and the keys of the place were delivered up to our General. The inhabitants of Mattūn all came forward to see the great sight, and it must have indeed been a great sight to them. They were accompanied by drums and trumpets, and huge red and green banners

lying. Our party then went through the different buildings worth seeing. The Khost valley we found to be most picturesque, and the villages were all lime-washed and very clean looking. Like the other villages in Afghanistan, they were surrounded by four walls, and in this instance a watch tower was built at each corner. These little white villages, garnished as they were by trees, looked uncommonly pretty in the distance. A large fort was the principal object of interest in the place, and I believe that before we took the Peiwar Kotal some of the Ameer's troops had been stationed in it. Not far from the fort were the remains of what looked like stables and quarters for cavalry; when we arrived, however, there was not a horseman to be seen. We pitched our camp just in front of the fort on a beautiful flat turfy ground. Before us, some three or four miles distant, stood the range

of hills occupied by the Mangals from whom we expected a little trouble sooner or later. I discovered that there was water very near the surface of the ground upon which we had formed our camp, which was easily demonstrated by driving a stick into the earth and bringing it out again quite wet. This, doubtless, was the cause, to a great extent, of the malarious diseases which prevailed among the troops during our stay in the Khost country. Almost immediately after we arrived, news came that the Mangals were about to attack the Peiwar Kotal Brigade which was commanded by Brigadier-General Thelwell, so that should our presence not divert their attention we might be sent off in that direction at any moment as a reinforcement. Rain hung about for the first few days, and had it come down we would have been in an awful hat, for we had only seventeen days' provisions with us, and anything that increased the boggy con-

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dition of the country would also flood the streams that had to be crossed, and make the rocky and dangerous passes, through which we had come, more slippery than ever. This also would cause a great delay in our march back, and might result in our being without rations for man or beast. The risk, too, of sending a convoy of supplies to us with a small escort, such as could be spared, through so strange and wild a country would have been very great. We were, therefore, praying that no rain might fall to complicate matters.

Having established ourselves, as it were, at Mattūn, the Governor gave our people to understand that we might make ourselves comfortable as far as any molesting on the part of the Khostis was concerned. He also wished us to believe that as far as he knew an attack upon us by any of the surrounding hill tribes was quite out of the question. Whether the same gentleman guaranteed our

safety or not I did not hear. To speak the honest truth I did not attach much importance to his assurances, and as I lay down that same night to sleep, I thought to myself that I hoped General Roberts and his Politicals would not pin their faith too much to this plausible Governor, for assuredly there was to me a look in the countenances of the Khost people (who were supposed to be quite friendly towards us) and a quietness pervading the air, that I confess made me feel a little suspicious and curious as to the course events would take. I may mention that within a few hours of our arrival at Mattūn one of our native followers had been foully murdered, and this incident should not have tended to inspire much confidence in our neighbours. Our whole force was practically under arms during the night of the 6th of January, and outlying pickets were posted like a belt around the camp. This, with the

number of sentries on duty, gave the soldiers very little rest during the night; in fact, as we say in the Service, "the average number of nights in bed" for the 6th was very small.

Just before turning in I took a stroll round our outposts and found them all very jolly under the circumstances. I heard a Highlander, who was lying flat on the ground with his rifle at the "present," calling the attention of his comrade to a tree which looked like a man in the distance, and remark, "What sight would you put up for that, George! 800 yards?" "No, I should say 600," answered George. In fact our men were very matter-of-fact and business-like in their ideas of warfare, which I think is far better than too much excitement. Half an hour after I had taken to bed I was startled by the sound of Colonel Gough's voice outside my tent, who said "that the Mangals were known to be already assembled

in force and might attack us that very night!" It was cloudy and dark and consequently favourable to the enemy, for they could see distinctly how our camp lay by the picket fires, although we could not have distinguished them coming up stealthily. These hill men, too, have a pleasant way of creeping up to within a short distance of a camp and then running "amuck," as it is called, in the darkness from one end to the other cutting and slashing and firing into everything that comes in their way. It would be no doubt very unkind of them not to give us warning of their coming, but we had nevertheless to be prepared and not let them run amuck that night. After Colonel Gough's intimation, the whole camp, I may say, was astir and on the alert. One troop of the 10th Hussars was ordered to be saddled at once and the men to stand to their horses; the other troop to be in readi-

ness at a moment's notice. We were further ordered to lie down for the remainder of the night in our clothes, booted and spurred, and our horses to be ready saddled and at hand. Some of the officers were up all night, so must have been the troops who were held in readiness to move when required. No attack, however, was made during the night, and at eight o'clock the next morning all appeared quiet again. We were, indeed, informed that some compromise had already been made between our Politicals and certain Mangal Chiefs who had been in our camp in the early morning. The troops were therefore unharnessed from war gear, and the horses once more were allowed to bow their heads in happiness among the grassy heaps which lay before them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ACTION AT MATTŪN.

THE 7th of January, however, was destined to be the most eventful day of the Khost expedition. At noon, after waiting in suspense, I might say since daybreak, the order came like lightning that we were to prepare for an attack. Trumpets sounded shrill and fast, perhaps with an excitable tremor in their blasts. "Stand to your horses," was once more shouted, this time by a dozen anxious voices, and the sound of the bugles rang through the camp with the notes of the "Fall in." The force this day, in fact, from General Roberts down to "Sepoy Bukhtar Singh" was in the greatest state of excitement. At a quarter to one o'clock the General, perhaps seeing a little hesitation on the part of the enemy, determined on taking

the initiative, and ordered a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry (who were fine fellows and splendidly mounted), under the command of Major Stewart, to reconnoitre the enemy. They dashed off at a swinging gallop across the plain in front of us, and in the direction of the hills to the left of our camp. Having gone about two miles and a half they evidently came suddenly upon the enemy in force (who I heard afterwards were concealed in some villages lying in that direction) for shots were exchanged smartly, and amid a little cloud of dust and smoke I observed that the troop was galloping back to camp hard.

It appears that they came upon about fifteen hundred Mangals at the foot of the hills, occupying small mounds and nullahs, and who, from all appearances, were intending to attack our camp. General Roberts, no doubt, was perfectly right to take the initia-

tive with regard to these warlike Mangals, for it was infinitely preferable to fight them in open daylight and give them a good lesson before they could combine and plan a midnight attack upon us. There is no doubt also that all day on the 6th, the air smelt of treachery, and I thought it a very strange thing that many of the camel drivers and grass cutters seemed afraid to go as usual into the jungle for fodder; perhaps they too "smelt a rat!" Nor did our followers appear to fraternize with, or put much faith in the Khosti villagers whom the Governor had led us to believe were the most harmless race of people. In fact I rather doubted my friend, the Governor, with all his smiles and confidences, and did not consider him far removed from the rest of his salaaming and traitor-like fellow countrymen. At about a quarter to two the squadron of the 10th Hussars and another troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry

were ordered to proceed in the direction of the firing. On arriving at the villages near the foot of the Mangal Hills they found the enemy in force. The latter did not attempt to bolt at the sight of our cavalry but prepared to meet them, and I may mention that these Afghans are accustomed to horsemen, and I daresay, from experience, consider a warrior on foot more than equal to a mounted one. Their surprise must, however, have been great in this instance, for on arriving within 800 yards of them half of the Hussars quickly dismounted and as quickly opened fire upon them. The 5th Cavalry followed suit, and a smart and effective fire was kept up, the Martini-Henry carbines of our horsemen proving very destructive little weapons. The enemy were accordingly driven back upon their supports, and finding that they were anything but a match for us in the open plain, commenced

to ascend the hills. This they were quite right in doing as they are more accustomed to hill warfare, and in this instance the ground was so rocky and steep that no cavalry could have possibly followed them.

During the little manoeuvre I have just related two men of the 5th Punjab Cavalry were wounded, one of them sustaining a very nasty penetrating wound of the knee-joint which was afterwards found to have been caused by a huge slug. Another man of the same regiment was thrown from his horse which bolted, and, I am sorry to say, fell into the enemy's hands. Before the Mangals had sufficiently recovered from this first smart blow, a general advance in the same direction was ordered, and the cavalry were promptly supported by the 28th Punjab Native Infantry and four mountain guns, the former doubling up briskly. One wing of the 28th was ordered to follow the enemy as well as they

could up the hills ; they could not however go very far on account of the steepness and rockiness of the ground. A sharp fire of musketry was soon opened upon the enemy which was returned by the Mangals as they lined a stony ridge about half-way up the hill. The enemy, indeed, took every advantage of cover, and showed themselves well accustomed to the business. I fancy the Sniders of the 28th must have been very effective and admirably handled by these native soldiers, who displayed, to my mind, on this occasion, staunch fighting qualities. Led by British officers our Sepoys are, no doubt, very excellent men, for wherever the "Captain Sahib" goes, they follow. Our four mountain guns had been posted on a grassy mound near the foot of the hills, and when they came into action the enemy retreated higher and higher up the hills. Our shells did not appear to do much execution because

they had to be thrown at such a great elevation, the distance being about 1,200 yards.

I must say that at the best of times these little mountain guns are not very effective, and on this occasion most of the shells burst too far over the heads of the enemy, and I observed that the Mangals had the sagacity to lie flat down with their faces to the ground every time a shot was fired. After the shell had passed over them, as it did in most cases, they sprang to their feet again brandishing their swords, and shouting and dancing evidently with wild delight and defiance. The number of the enemy in this direction must have been about six thousand, and I forgot to mention that they were headed by red, green, and white standards. The men who carried these standards were exceedingly plucky (perhaps picked warriors), and after their comrades had retired almost to the summit of the hill one of them would run a

good distance down the slope by himself and with a fiendish laugh wave his flag, triumphantly courting death as it were. One of these daring fellows, however, came to a bad end, for a well-directed shell from one of the mountain guns (pointed in this instance, I believe, by Lieutenant Manners Smith) hit him straight in the chest, and he dropped dead. Another hero was soon found, for the standard was again seized by a comrade (even more bold than the former) who ran about fifty yards *lower down the hill* and there planted it. He then ran back to his friends, leaving the flag, I suppose, with the idea of drawing fire upon it. The firing of the enemy became rather slack by half-past three o'clock, and it could be plainly seen that they had found their masters. The engagement on this, the left front attack, lasted altogether about three hours and a half, and having then silenced the enemy we commenced to retire. Even

then a solitary Mangal crept down to within 300 yards of the 10th Hussars and fired a parting shot at them, luckily, however, doing no mischief.

Now while all this was taking place in the left front direction, it was found that the enemy had secreted themselves in great numbers in the villages all round our camp. In fact it was plainly to be seen that the attack which I have just described, was only a part of their well-planned designs, for no sooner had they drawn off as they thought the greater part of our little force in the direction of the before-mentioned hills, when numbers of Mangals, etc., poured out of the villages to the right and rear of our camp and advanced towards it. General Roberts had, however, in the first instance anticipated this and had made his arrangements accordingly, for at the same time as the Brigade under Colonel Hugh Gough was

about to engage the enemy (on the left front) a small force under Colonel Barry Drew advanced from the right flank, and another from the rear of our camp, to do battle. I must mention that a sufficient number of men, all in fact that could be spared, had been left in camp to guard it. The engagement at Mattûn, therefore, soon became general, and the booming of the mountain guns and rattling of musketry were to be heard in all directions. As evening closed in and the enemy were beaten back on all sides the villages were shelled and fired. The sight indeed was then very grand although it brought one face to face with the horrors of war. On one side the advancing columns plodding along and fighting their way in earnest, and on the other the blazing villages. The enemy ran in all directions, and a general rout followed.

I may here observe that the Governor

of Khost must surely have had some idea of the concealment of so many Mangals (who by the bye are enemies of the Khostis) in his villages; and the fact, too, that all the Khosti women had been sent away the day before the action, looked rather against him and his friendly intentions. At one large village in the rear, our troops came upon a great number of the enemy concealed, between whom and the 21st Punjab Native Infantry a sharp encounter took place. It was in this direction, too, that Major Stewart and a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry charged home, doing good execution among the Mangals, who stood their ground well, and fired into the faces of our men. It was observed here that these Mangals had a nasty knack of suddenly falling down as they were ridden at, and then as quickly jumping up and firing at the horsemen as they passed. This dodge in some cases had

the effect of unseating a cavalry man, who, from the force of his cut, having missed his man, would fall from his horse. Colonel Hugh Gough's force commenced to retire some time before the fighting in the rear had finished, and about five o'clock an orderly was sent from General Roberts to Colonel Gough with instructions for the latter to send his cavalry as quickly as possible across country in the direction of the rear attack, in order to cut off a number of the enemy who were escaping over the open ground and out of range of the infantry. Then there *was* a gallop in earnest, spurs were driven in, and every muscle strained, for both man and horse seemed eager to get on. Ditches, and furze, and banks, were flown over as if they were nothing. On they went, here a horse three feet into a boggy bit of ground, there another thrown down by a rock, and then a rider swung violently to the ground by the

swerving of his charger at a desperate looking "gridiron." But never mind! Up again! Come on! All were burning with a desire to get at the retreating Mangals.

After three miles of hard riding the squadron dashed passed the villages to the admiration of a few stragglers who still remained; but it was, alas, too late! The enemy had in the meantime got clean away and up the hills, and there could be no advantage in attempting to follow them any longer. During this gallop one of the 5th Punjab Cavalry got effectually bogged, and was badly wounded, as well as stripped by a small party of Khostis who were prowling about.

At 6.30 p.m. all was over, and the force returned to camp very tired after their hard day's work. The native followers were then allowed to go and loot the villages that were burning and smouldering steadily. This they did in the most perfect manner, and before night our

camp was stocked with bullocks, sheep, goats, fowl, ponies, gunpowder and old-fashioned matchlocks and swords of every Asiatic description. Our casualties were very small indeed, which was no doubt, due to the inferior weapons of the enemy and to the longer range of ours. The casualty return was as follows :—

(5th Punjab Cavalry).—*Killed*, two men ; *wounded*, four men.

Three of their horses were also wounded ; three were missing.

(No. 2 Mountain Battery).—*Wounded*, one man.

(21st P.N. Infantry).—*Killed*, one man ; *wounded*, four men.

The British portion of the force, it will be seen from this, had no casualties ; but there were several camp followers killed and wounded. On the night of the 7th we laid down again in our clothes, in case of accidents, and several shots were fired into camp.

CHAPTER XX.

A NIGHT OF CONVIVIALITY AND AN ATTACK ON OUR CAMP.

THE following day, as might have been expected, we were all a little anxious with regard to what would happen next, and although we had no doubt given the Mangals a lesson, yet we felt that our force was very small (under 2,000 men) and that we had plenty of work before us. Many of the villagers continued still to hang about our camp, taking stock, no doubt. General Roberts, however, kept everybody and everything well up to the mark, and took every precaution with regard to ensuring the safety of the force under his command.

On the 8th I thought I should have had time to have written a letter or two, but no sooner had I begun than the cavalry were

ordered out again to reconnoitre the surrounding country. There still, therefore, was a good deal of excitement going on. All the troops were in first-rate spirits after their success, and showed the greatest confidence in their General, which among the native soldiery is no small matter. No post from Hazir Pir came in on the 8th, and it was greatly feared that it had been stolen, and probably the carrier murdered. Indeed several shots were heard in the direction of the pass through which our postman would have to come.

I may here mention that our letter-bag was carried by friendly natives of the country, who of course were paid highly for their trouble. They had indeed a very dangerous mission, but stood a better chance of safety than any of our native soldiers would have. A gang of prisoners, and what are called "Head men" or chiefs, were

brought into camp the day following the engagement, and, from what I could gather, it would appear that the village people, as well as the Mangals, had had about enough of it. The villages were still burning, and any amount of looting was going on.

Now, as we had all done hard work since our arrival in Khost, and matters had somewhat settled down, I thought as I met Charlie on his way round the guards, that a little conviviality would not be out of place in the evening. So we decided that a meeting should take place in his tent, where we might devote our time to the worship of—well, not Bacchus certainly, because spirituous liquors beyond our “tots” of rum were unobtainable—but to the worship of music and mirth. I may here mention that Charlie had managed to bring his banjo even into this uncivilized land, upon which instrument he was most pro-

ficient. With the help of Ryan's baritone vocal organs and the aforesaid musical instrument, therefore, a tolerably pleasant evening was spent and enjoyed. Six of us managed to squeeze into Charlie's small tent, arranging ourselves as best we could, most of us on the bed, the remainder on the ground. The owner of the tent, of course, held the post of honour, and he therefore became sole possessor of the three-legged stool, which in its rudeness and awkward proportions looked uncommonly shy and as if it would so much like to apologise for not being more graceful and solid. Pipes were soon filled and lit up, old stories were told, brothers, sisters, cousins and sweethearts were spoken of reverentially, and then with a bang the host called the attention of the company, rattling at the same time the bowl of his cumbrous "tobacconistic receptacle" on the aforementioned three-legged stool. "Order ! Order !" shouted everybody.

“Gentlemen,” began Charlie, “unaccustomed as I am to—(here Ryan made a fool of himself by bawling out ‘public speaking’)—the sight of five such jolly faces as we have before us to-night, yet I may say that I think I shall in time recover from the effects (laughter, and cries of Order). I regret, gentlemen, that I have seen very little of you lately, each one of us, of course, having had our separate duties to perform in the late warlike events, (hear, hear) in which I hope, gentlemen, that we have all done credit to our most distinguished corps (cheers). In fact, duty is light if you go about it with a will and a wish to perform it rightly; and I find, gentlemen, and I hope you will all agree with me (certainly, certainly) that one never gets into a ‘straight’ about anything if one is ‘bent’ on doing it (cries of ‘Turn him out.’) Excuse the villanous pun, old boys, and I will now conclude my speech by calling for songs all round, which is the next

thing in the programme, so I hope Paddy Ryan will oblige." (Here cries of "Ryan, a song," were raised.) The gentleman alluded to favoured the company with "Paddy Carey's Ball," a very Irish song, the chorus of which went like this—

Then you ought to've seen us there,
The truth I do declare;
All so frisky, dhrunk on whiskey,
Dhrive away despair.
There was fightin' to be sure,
Indade it was a shquall!
The night was spent in divilment
At Paddy Carey's Ball!

There is no doubt about it, Ryan's song "went down," and was sung with spirit and a most appropriate Irish brogue. Charlie next gave us a capital selection on the banjo; then Templeton, a rather inferior "break-down," in which he very much broke down; and then I was called upon for a song. I commenced "A little more cider too," and had just finished the first verse, when bang, bang, bang! went all round the camp, and

before we could buckle on our revolvers, which we had removed for comfort and laid in a corner of the tent, certainly fifty rifle shots, in rapid succession, were blazed off, the firing seeming to be on every side of the camp. We all turned out (Ryan whispering to me, "An attack, sure!") and separated then and there. Just as we parted, a bullet whizzed past our tent, and another thudded the ground by the Hospital, which was close to us. It was a pitch dark night, and coming from the "lighted hall of conviviality" we all stumbled about over our tent ropes and pegs, doing great damage, and I distinctly heard Ryan using bad language when, with a heavy flop, he was precipitated over a tent rope, which nothing could persuade him had not been placed there on purpose to throw him down. What made him more angry, too, was Templeton, who said, in an injured tone, "Hold up Ryan for goodness sake, and mind

my ropes, please." This remark, however, brought a "sthory" to Ryan's mind, for the next morning he took me on one side, and said, "Fancy that young bosthoon Templeton puttin' more value on his ould tint ropes than on moy loife, and that remoids me of the story of the barber who was shavin' a cove with a very hollow cheek, and who, to get the razor to go smoothly over it, put his thumb into the fellow's mouth to fill it out, when suddenly, as he was shavin' him, he pulls his thumb out bleeding, and says, 'Oh, murther, I've cut me thumb!' Bedad, he forgot that he had gone through the fellow's cheek!" Here Ryan burst out laughing as if he had heard the joke himself for the first time.

Well, to return to the firing. I ran off immediately in the direction from whence the most shots seemed to come, and on getting to the extreme right of the camp,

soon found out the cause of all the row. It appeared that some forty prisoners, whom we had taken on the 7th, were bound together and placed under a Sikh guard of the 21st Regiment, and on some shots being fired into camp (whether premeditated or pre-arranged I cannot say), they all managed to rise in a body, some of them extricating themselves from the telegraph wires with which they were bound together. This of course brought the Sikhs into play, and they instantly fell upon their prisoners, and fired into them and bayoneted them *ad libitum*. It was the work of a moment, but very horrible. I suppose these prisoners thought, or knew, that the attack on our right flank, where they were tied, was an attempt to rescue them, but they indeed paid sadly for their trouble. The moon rose at the time, and the sight was too dreadful! About nine of them were dead when I got there, wallowing

in blood from frightful wounds. About fifteen more were terribly wounded and apparently dying, and they were all, the living and the dead, still bound together, the former wailing and crying "Allah ! Allah !"

On the following morning, I went down again to see these poor creatures, and found that eleven more were dead and lying in a ghastly heap, and several others were still bleeding from their wounds. Our doctors certainly looked after them as well as they could, and were up the whole night attending to their sufferings and wants. The air being so frosty at night, they had all been covered over with a huge tarpaulin, and there they lay !

We were all delighted the same day to see our good postman galloping along towards camp, so we had an afternoon read of letters, which just then was most welcome.

CHAPTER XXI.

OUR STAY IN KHOST.

THE reason of the delay in our post was that it had been stolen from the escort carrying it, who were attacked and stripped. On our threatening, however, to destroy a neighbouring village the scoundrels delivered up the mail bag to us. Our letters, therefore, had had an adventure, and the fact of their having been in the enemy's hands for a time made them more dear to us when we got them.

We heard on the 10th that a raid had been made upon Dera Ishmael Khan by a band of Waziris, and that they had received a warm lesson from our small force there. The same day all the prisoners, with the exception of a few very notorious characters, were set free on the receipt of ransoms from their

villages. Some companies of the 21st Punjab Native Infantry were ordered to occupy the Mattūn Fort, which indeed afforded very fair shelter. The men pitched their tents in a large courtyard, while the officers managed to find rooms in different parts of the building ; these, of course, were very damp, with their earthen walls and floors, but with the help of straw, etc., were made pretty snug. One of the rooms, which I think had been selected by the commanding officer, had some pieces of stained glass for windows, which in these parts would no doubt be greatly prized, and it was conjectured that this must have been the abode of the ladies belonging to the Governor, who had, it appears, resided in this fort. In another part of the building there was a large hall, which had no doubt been used as a council chamber, and had a small altar-like structure at one end. This was promptly converted into a

native hospital, and our sick and wounded were put there.

I forgot to mention that on our march into Khost General Roberts had left nine *sowars* (native cavalry men) at a small village some seven or eight miles short of Mattūn, to act as a kind of post or guard. I must say I did not envy them their position as the villagers were anything but of a friendly disposition. It appears that these nine *sowars* were attacked, robbed, and taken prisoners by the villagers soon after we had left them.

On the 11th, however, they surprised us all by marching into camp, bringing with them three or four ruffians from the very village they had occupied, and, as well as I could find out, the *sowars* had managed to get possession of their arms again, and by threats, I suppose, frightened in their turn the men who had held them prisoners, and brought them in triumph to General Roberts.

We rather expected that a "hanging parade" would follow, but the ruffians were, I think, ransomed.

The next day was Sunday, and everything seemed peaceable, the sun shone brightly, and the very air appeared to smell of Sunday. Divine service was held at 10 a.m., and Mr. Adams gave us an impressive sermon. A smart man, too, was this Parson Adams, no man better able to ride across country, and no man cooler and braver in the hour of danger; yet he did his work properly, conscientiously, and earnestly, and never spared himself, whether in action or otherwise, in doing all the good he was able.

A portion of our small force was put into the fort on the same day, for a reconaissance further up the valley was to take place on the following.

In the afternoon, therefore, the remainder of the 21st P.N.I., some of the 5th P.C., and

two mountain guns took up their abode there, and set to in the first place to try and clean the filthy building and yard, and make it habitable.

On the morning of the 13th the remainder of the force marched about six miles up the valley and encamped upon a nice grassy spot. This was followed by a calvalry reconnaissance of the villages and surrounding country, and the 10th Hussars had a good deal of hard riding, but no opposition was met with.

On the 15th they marched back to Mattün, reconnoitring on the way all the villages, jumping walls and ditches, and prying into every nook and corner. It was there that I noticed how well General Roberts sat his horse, and he and the parson appeared to be always leading.

In one of these villages we came across a *Mālîk* (Chief) who had been very severely

wounded in the chest and arm, and our surgeon jumped off his horse and looked after him, setting his fractured limb, and leaving some dressing for the poor old chap. The men now began to suffer a good deal from fever, neuralgia, and chest complaints, which no doubt was due to water being so near the surface of the ground they were lying upon, as well as to exposure during the frosty nights.

On the 16th the Cavalry again went out towards the Mangal hills, but not one of those gentlemen was to be found.

On the next day the gallant 10th Hussars were horrified to hear that they were soon to go back to India, and worst of all to be relieved by a squadron of the 9th Lancers. Yes, to be relieved by other troopers, that was the worst of it! The 10th had indeed done their work well, and nothing could have been smarter than their general appear-

ance, while *esprit de corps* was their backbone.

It struck me at the time, but I don't know whether my conjecture was right, that the reason of the change was that Lancers were more suitable to the kind of warfare that was going on, and of course in the pursuit of an enemy nothing could be better. However the 10th didn't like it at all, and everybody else was sorry at the idea of losing so genial a lot of followers.

A large convoy of supplies came in on the 17th, escorted by two companies of the 72nd Highlanders, the 23rd Pioneers (all Musbi Sikhs), and two companies of the 5th Ghoorkhas ; a strong force indeed, but not one bit too much for the prevailing state of affairs.

In the afternoon some sporting fellow, I think it was Neville Chamberlain, got up a paper chase to which Charlie, Ryan,

and I went, and we had great fun. We noticed a good many frogs on our way home which somebody remarked jocularly were in(ditch)enous to the country! This was dreadful for the time of year, but capped by Ryan who said, when I discovered a wild pig (there were plenty of them in Afghanistan) lying in the hollow trunk of a pine tree, that it looked like "a porky pine!" Ryan suffered for this, for we chased him all the way home, and made him sing any amount of songs in the evening. The Sufed Khoh range of mountains, which ran along to the front of our camp, looked very fine just at this time, covered with snow, their height ranging from ten to fifteen thousand feet. No rain had fallen since we left Hazir Pir, and we heard, indeed, from some natives of the place that it had not rained in Khost for two years! The country was so well irrigated by mountain streams, and the ground so

porous that very little rain was required for agricultural purposes, etc. The band of the 23rd Pioneers, a very good one too, played a selection on the afternoon of the 18th, which was very cheerful and most acceptable.

On the 20th the General made an inspection of the Cavalry, and nothing could have been smarter than they. There was a march past, and some exercises and field manoeuvres performed. After that, sports were got up, which included foot races and one or two matches for ponies. All this helped to while away the time, which was beginning to hang rather heavy.

The 23rd Pioneers left the force on the 21st on their way to make a new road between Mattūn and Hazir Pir; they were a very fine and well disciplined regiment, wore a karkee coloured uniform with chocolate facings, and all carried working tools as part of their equipment. Their officers were good

fellows, and I thought their medical officer very like the late Charles Dickens in appearance.

I began to suffer a good deal from neuralgia and fever at this time, and a great many of the men were knocked down with lung complaints which proved fatal in many cases, especially among the natives.

The Cavalry had a very long day on the 22nd, and were out reconnoitring from 11 o'clock in the morning until 5 in the evening. The next day they also had a rough time of it, getting over some 28 miles of ground, and both men and horses looked uncommonly tired. It had been reported that the Mangals were hanging about again, but none were seen, and it was beginning to be pretty evident that they did not wish to measure swords with us any more.

The camp was now entrenched all round, and walls erected, which were formed chiefly

of camel saddles, these answering the purpose admirably. Indeed the camp looked uncommonly snug and secure. Experiments with star shells were made at night, and the villages were lit up most vividly for a minute by them, which must indeed have astonished the natives.

News arrived on the 24th that Candahar had been occupied by General Stewart's force, and 21 guns (from our little mountain chaps) were fired in honour of the event. The next day General Roberts made up his mind that a further stay in Khost, to all intents and purposes, was useless, and preparations to leave it were commenced.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE END OF THE KHOST EXPEDITION AND ANOTHER VISIT TO KOHÂT.

ON the morning of the 27th therefore, we left Mattūn, and marched ten miles on the road back to Hazir Pir. A new route had been selected for our return, which was believed to be shorter than the one by which we came. In common with many others the malarious influence of the Khost Valley had now begun to tell upon me, and on that particular morning I was intensely weak and sickly, so much so that my legs appeared to give under me, and moreover I was hardly able to sit my horse. On the next day a sharp attack of fever came on with ulcerated throat and low spirits, and what with a severe headache and hacking cough, I really thought

I was quite breaking up. The same evening news came that the Mangals, directly they were informed of our departure from Mattūn, had come in force from their hills and were marching straight for the fort. Now I must mention that a sort of Governor had been placed in this fort by us when we left, and money and corn, &c., were, I believe, given to him. No regular troops or guns were however left for his protection, and only a body of Turis (a friendly tribe in those parts) some 400 strong, were considered necessary to look after him and his property. This, to me, appeared as good as an invitation to the Mangals to come and loot the place and kill the said Governor directly our backs were turned—for they were not very frightened of the Turis. On hearing the news therefore, half of our force was detailed to return to Mattūn and find out the state of affairs. The Mangals were indeed found as reported, and

a small skirmish followed in which some of them were killed. We had no casualties, and returned the same day (the 29th) to camp. I may add that the Governor and his bodyguard of Turis were more than delighted to see our faces again, and no wonder if it were true as they reported, that five thousand Mangals had lit up fires in front of the fort the previous night, around which they danced with joy at the thought of their prize.

The next day we marched sixteen miles, and encamped on a nasty marshy spot. During the afternoon we heard that a most important personage, Wali Mahomed to wit, was coming from Cabul, to make his salaams (obeisance) to General Roberts. Now he was, I believe, half-brother to the Ameer himself, and had been Commander-in-Chief of the Ameer's army, but whether he was coming as a messenger from him or on his own

account, nobody knew. I rather fancied the latter, as in the state of affairs at that time he would have certainly been the gainer by giving us information, and perhaps going in himself for the throne of Cabul. That sixteen mile march was a most tiresome one owing to the bad road, which was terribly rocky and very narrow. One soldier of the 10th Hussars died during the journey from a lung complaint. Indeed pneumonia was dreadfully prevalent just at that time, and I believe the 21st P.N.I. and the 5th P.C. suffered very much from it, the former regiment losing ten, and the latter six men during the last three or four days we were in Khost.

On the 31st, we marched into Hazir Pir, and was glad to get back and see some of our old friends again. A wing of the 8th King's was still stationed there, and it was certainly pleasanter to be able to pitch our camp in a more permanent manner than we had been

doing of late. Thus ended, therefore, the Khost expedition, which had lasted about a month. A previously unknown country had been brought to light, marched to successfully, and explored I might say. What the intentions of the Government with regard to it would be, it was impossible to say. It certainly had the appearance of being the most fertile part of Afghanistan we had met with, and if any tract of that wretched, stony, and barren country could possibly be an acquisition to England, it would most certainly be the Khost Valley. Impressive scenes are no doubt of many kinds, but none could be more so than the funeral of the British soldier, who was buried in a quiet corner of the Hazir Pir camp. It was the 1st of February, and solemn and sad were the faces of the stalwart 10th Hussar men as they laid one of their comrades under the sod. The quietness and stillness of the

camp, the uncouth-looking *doli* in which the poor fellow was carried, the blankets which took the place of more spotless shrouds, and the dear old charger following the master whom he had carried through many a dangerous path, all tended to make the scene most impressive.

In the afternoon of the same day, the camp was startled by the announcement of the arrival of the afore-mentioned Wali Mahomed, from Cabul. I don't know at all what was the result of his meeting with General Roberts, but I had an idea that he came, as I said before, with certain aspirations to the Afghan throne.

On Sunday, the 2nd of the month, matters to my mind began to look very much settled with regard to the war in this part of the world, and no doubt most of us thought that the work for the Kuram force, at any rate, was well nigh

finished. The Khyber column, on the other hand, were having more exciting times, and my wish was if possible to try and get across there. This fortunately I managed, for I obtained permission to wend my way towards Kohât, for the purpose of joining the Peshawar field force, and thus on to Jellalabad.

Now it happened that the 10th Hussar squadron were at that very time under orders to march to Jellalabad, *viâ* Kohât, for the purpose of joining the head quarters of their regiment. I accordingly got leave to proceed with them. A farewell dinner was given to the squadron by General Roberts and staff, and the 72nd Highlanders *fêted* them also.

The squadron marched on the morning of the 4th, and I packed up my goods and chattels and accompanied them. Right good fellows they were, and I never had a jollier time than during our journey to Kohât, short as it was. Rain came on un-

fortunately just as we had arrived at our first camping ground, which made the place unpleasantly wet for pitching on. There is nothing so disagreeable as having to pitch one's tent on wet ground; everything becomes so damp and looks so cheerless. We had done sixteen miles, and were glad to get our rations well cooked and piping hot, which they certainly were. We were intending to make good long marches this journey, and accordingly pushed on to Thall the following day.

Thall, which I remembered as a very stony and barren mound, with the tents pitched as best they could, had since been vastly improved, and presented the appearance of a well-kept camp when we arrived there. The lines were nicely laid out, and plenty of lime-washing marked the little streets between the rows of tents. The dâk bungalow tent had quite a tempting appear-

ance, and what with the busy-looking post and telegraph offices, the Commissariat Godown, and the Parsee's establishments, Thall had quite a gay appearance. I was delighted to meet an old friend of mine, Major Mitford, of the 14th Bengal Lancers there, and dined with him accordingly. There was a squadron of his regiment at Thall, and right well they looked too, and fit for any work. We only halted the night, and left the following morning. Another sixteen miles was completed and we camped again.

Hangoo was reached the next day, and we were now nearing Kohât. One of General Roberts's native advisers, who was named Mahomed Amîr, paid us a visit at Hangoo, and before starting the next day sent us a plentiful supply of chapatties and hard-boiled eggs as a "bakhsheesh." We put seventeen miles more to our credit on the 8th, and I was beginning to feel a bit stiff. I remarked how much improved the road between Thall

and Kohât was since I last saw it, and a large amount of labour by the Engineers had no doubt been bestowed upon it. The country people too, along the roads and in the villages appeared far more civil and pleased to see us than they were on our advance in the same direction three months before. I suppose they understood perfectly that we had had it all our own way in the front.

It was now getting much warmer in the day-time, and Kohât is not the most pleasant place in the world when the weather begins to get hot. We arrived there on the 9th, and the first thing that attracted my attention was, that the place appeared to be full of soldiers, and the 92nd Highlanders, who were to be seen everywhere, looked uncommonly smart and well-set up. Here I met one or two old friends, and when I mention that one was a lady, my readers can easily imagine what a pleasant evening was spent.

The next day was a gala one, for the benefit

of Wali Mahomed, whom I have already mentioned, and who had since come to Kohât. All the troops, including some five thousand native levies, lent to us by certain Indian princes, turned out in martial array for the said Wali's inspection. On going down the line, I must say, that our 9th Lancers and Highlanders looked as they always do—first-rate—and contrasted most favourably with the less stalwart black troops of the Rajahs ; although indeed the latter were wiry-looking fellows. Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry were well represented, and the Wali, I am sure, must have been gratified. I dined at the garrison mess in the evening, which was indeed a treat after all the late “roughing it.”

This garrison mess is an admirable institution, and is supported by all the native regiments stationed in Kohât at the time. Besides every convenience in the way of eating and drinking, there is also a good billiard room,

an excellent library, and a large room for dancing, which contains a good piano and a stage for amateur theatricals. I enjoyed myself thoroughly, and a good deal of singing and jollification went on after dinner.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BACK AGAIN TO AFGHANISTAN.

My prospects of proceeding to the Khyber column were soon destroyed after our arrival in Kohât, for on the 11th I received definite orders to return to the Kuram Field Force at once. I, therefore, was a good deal mortified when the 10th Hussars left, without me, for Jellalabad. Some little difficulty cropped up in the form of my not being able to secure a seat in the post cart (there was one running now to Thall) for a few days, so in the meantime I amused myself as best I could in Kohât. The morning that the 10th left, I had breakfast with a friend in the 8th King's, some companies of which regiment were stationed here at the time, and there met another pal in G/3 Battery Royal Artillery. I also took the opportunity of telegraphing

to Rawul Pindi for a pony of mine that I had left to the care of the chaplain there, and which I thought would be of service to me.

The little animal arrived safely before I left again for Thall. I actually sported my figure at a dance one evening, and enjoyed myself very much. There I met for the first time a particularly lovely woman, who I was informed had the credit of being the "frontier beauty!" The next afternoon I spent a musical couple of hours with more friends, and wound up by dining with a medico of one of the Indian Corps, so altogether I made the most of my visit to Kohât, and left for Thall at 6.30 on the morning of the 16th, and was delighted to find that I had a fellow-traveller in the person of Mr. Josephs, of the Telegraph Department. He had engaged the other seat of the dâk cart, and as he was a most genial companion I

considered myself in luck, for the journey was a long and dreary one. We got to the end of it, however, at four o'clock in the evening, and were tired and dusty in the extreme. Fancy jolting along in a two-wheeler over the roughest of ground; and drawn at a gallop by two fiendish quadrupeds for nearly ten hours ! At Thall I met my old friend Van Someren of the Postal Department, whom I was very glad to see and get a shake down from, as my tent had not yet come up. An improvement still had taken place here, for in sombre letters on a large board, which for a joke had been stuck up in front of a most imposing looking mud edifice, were the words—

“MARTIN, Contractor and Road Maker.”

The proprietor, I may mention, was a Royal Engineer officer, who was at the time employed in making roads, etc. On the

night of the 17th I dined with an officer of the 29th Native Infantry, who told me that a little excitement had been caused at Thall a few nights back by the burning of a tent to the ground. It appeared that two soldiers had occupied this tent, and must have fallen asleep while their candle was alight. At any rate, one poor fellow was burned to death, and the other very nearly so. This fire happened to be very near the powder magazine, which naturally increased the excitement. On the 18th General Roberts and Staff came into Thall, and I received further orders to go on to Hazir Pir for duty as soon as I could get my things together. Everything appeared to be settling down so now, that there was no hurry and flurry attached to orders, as was the case a month back. My ponies came in all right, one of them, however, looking very bad conditioned. Some of the 14th Bengal Lancers were still at Thall,

and I was asked to join their little mess, a kindness I gladly availed myself of, especially as I had excellent companions in Neville and Whittall. The latter, poor fellow, afterwards died of cholera, and although he was the keenest and cheeriest of soldiers, did not live to win any fame. It was beginning to get extremely hot during the day time, which was funny for the time of year. Shaves were going through camp as to the probabilities of a continuation of the war, and whether Yakoob Khan, who had now possession of the throne of Cabul, had any intention of fighting. In favour of the idea that the war was practically over, a part of our force was expecting to receive orders to return to India. The native contingents arrived in Thall on the 20th for the purpose of taking up the posts between that place and Hazir Pir, and it was afterwards found that they did their work admirably, and

doubtless were of the greatest assistance to the Government, although they were very badly armed. A fine road was being made on the right bank of the Kuram river going out to Hazir Pir, which would be a great improvement upon the old one. I had the pleasure of hearing a native band *singing* a "vocal galop" while at Thall this time, which rather surprised me, as I never previously thought that natives had enough musical ear to sing or appreciate anything in music except their own weird strains. On the 22nd I left Thall for up-country again with a convoy of 700 camels, and it was a strange thing that the same transport officer with whom I went before was in charge this time.

This was very jolly, more especially as he was the possessor of some excellent Simla apricot jam, which often did duty on the march up, but alas ! lasted too short a period.

We took up our abode as before in the old mud fort at Ahmed Shāma, where we met a friend (one of the 21st) who was stationed there, road-making. I noticed that a good number of young camels accompanied their burdened mothers on this journey. Funny little things, to be sure; black and curly, and resembling ostriches somewhat I thought. They appeared very happy, poor little things, little knowing the life of toil before them.

A large boar was shot at Jelemi, and these animals appeared to be very plentiful about that part. The boar's flesh tasted capital made into steaks for dinner, and I noticed, too, that some we gave to a Hindoo and a Sikh was devoured greedily by them, the wild boar being a vegetarian. We reached Hazir Pir on the 24th, and rain commenced to fall heavily at the same time, which made things most unpleasant. This continued the whole night, but I had taken

the precaution to deeply entrench my tent and slacken off the ropes. I was in luck as far as eating and drinking were concerned, and now little delicacies in the shape of tinned provisions were more easily obtained than they were a month since, so that one's mess could, by a little judicious management, be made tolerably comfortable. I was kindly asked to join the mess of a Battery of Artillery stationed at Hazir Pir, and fared excellently. I was greatly surprised to find serving me at dinner time an old Khidmat-ghār, who had been in my service in India some months back, and even the sight of his well-known black face was pleasant. Hail as well as heavy rain fell all the next day, and the camp looked miserable. This also played the very mischief with the transport work, for convoys cannot get along at all well over the slippery ground in wet weather. The rain came down steadily till the morning of the 3rd March, when the

sun once more put in an appearance in grand style, and afforded a splendid opportunity for drying one's clothes and bedding, which if not actually wet, were disgustingly damp, cold, and clammy. The snow had by this time covered all the neighbouring hills, the Sufed Khoh range looking beautiful, and a mass of snowy whiteness. The air at night was therefore very sharp, and we wanted all the covering procurable. The Kuram river was rising very fast, and the water became extremely muddy, and went at a great speed. This was most inconvenient just then, as orders had been given for the camp to move to the other side of the river (as the new road which ran from Thall to Kuram was completed), and there would be great difficulty in getting everybody and everything across safely. The river was about four feet deep. Indeed, when the mountain snow would begin to melt and swell the Kuram, I felt sure that a bridge over it would be abso-

lutely necessary. I forgot to mention that a large elephant was at that time kept at Hazir Pir for the purpose of dragging away dead camels to their last abode, and I need not say that the stench in the neighbourhood was horrible. I heard afterwards that the poor elephant soon died from hard work, the camels succumbing in dozens! Our post, owing to the rain, was most irregular, and while this state of the weather remained unchanged it was always a mere chance whether letters would be delivered at all. To vary the monotony, one night (I think it was the 3rd March), a Sepoy of the 21st P.N.I. bolted from camp, taking his rifle with him. Where he went to nobody found out. News had now come that the Commander-in-Chief of India was about to make an inspection of the armies in Afghanistan and places of interest, and that our force would be reviewed at Kuram. About the same time, too, it was reported that Yakoob Khan had written in

for terms of peace to Kennick, our Political Officer at Kuram, and also that the Ameer was dead. One could not, however, put much faith in camp rumours. On the 5th the 21st P.N.I. crossed the Kuram river safely, and the whole camp was beginning to stir. In future it was understood that the post would be carried, and all troops and convoys would march on the other side of that river, which, in addition to the advantage of having a better road, would prevent also the necessity of having to re-cross it to get to Kuram, which was the case before. Rain was again hanging about, and the weather still very unsettled. I met one fellow I knew on his way to England, but he looked so changed by his beard having grown long that I hardly recognised him. Indeed, we must have all looked a good deal altered from the same cause, as razors were quite out of the question while campaigning.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TRIP WITH GENERAL ROBERTS AND THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

ON the night of the 7th of March I received a telegram to the effect that I was to join the Head-Quarter Staff for duty, thereby proceeding with General Roberts to Thall to meet the Commander-in-Chief. This, although it involved once more a visit to a place I was heartily sick of, was a feather in my cap, although it might only be for a short time; and besides, to be near "Little Bobs" was a treat for anybody. The prospect of my being able to pass the Kuram and proceed to Ibramzai, where I was to join the General, was rather dulled by the fact that the heavens were once more declaring themselves and the rain coming down again in torrents.

However, on the morning of the 9th it cleared up a little, so I managed to get away with a force *en route* for Badesh Kheyl, the first post on the other side. We found the river deep and running swiftly, and my pony was so small (which would have involved a drenching had I attempted to ride him across) that I mounted the limber of a gun-carriage and so got over; leaving the pony and servant to work their own passage. My little dog managed it admirably, but, of course, landed a good way down the river. Stout hawsers had been thrown across and attached on either side to guns for the guidance of the soldiers, and every necessary precaution was taken to prevent any accident. With the exception of some baggage, animals being washed away and baggage lost, no more serious accident occurred. Our camp at Badesh Kheyl was very lowly situated and unpleasantly wet into the bar-

gain. There were consequently many cases of fever, and it was horrible to see the men, especially the 72nd Highlanders, having to make their beds of straw on the swampy ground. Everything was cold and miserable and nothing in sight but snow-clad mountains. But in all this I could hear the soldiers singing at the top of their voices and putting aside dull care as best they could. Double "tots" of rum were served out that night which was much appreciated. The Peiwar Kotal was quite visible from Badesh Kheyl and looked a good height in the distance.

On the 12th I left the camp and joined the General and Staff. My first march with him was 17 miles, to a place called Mandori, and I may mention that General Roberts travels very quickly, and is a most indefatigable and apparently "never-tired" soldier. Indeed, we pushed on to Thall the

next day, thereby losing no time. We were drenched by the time we reached camp, it being a fearful day and the road very narrow and rocky in parts. When I arrived, shivering and wet to the skin, I really began to think that there was not much fun in this kind of campaigning, and wondered where on earth I should pitch my tent on the deluged ground. A nice prospect to be sure, thought I! Luck, however, once again favoured me, and who should whistle to me as I rode past his tent but Van Someren, whom I have before mentioned. He behaved like a brick. "Come along, old chap," was the greeting, and that meant a good deal. I was accordingly stripped by my friend, and even to the stockings was I fitted out. He then told me not to mind pitching my tent for the present, but to shake down in the few spare feet that were unoccupied in his. His old Madrased boy, a smart fellow, too, was

soon in attendance, and an impromptu but most acceptable currie was, almost in the twinkling of an eye, laid before us. We had a long chat that night and a couple of songs before turning in.

On the 14th a telegram came giving the names of the regiments to be detailed for an advance upon Cabul if necessary. This, however, was considered most improbable by everyone. I heard the same day a story *apropos* of two native soldiers, namely, a Pathan and a Ghoorka, which I may insert here. The former was asked why he wore khāki (mud-coloured) uniform. The man replied rightly: "To be invisible as much as possible, sir." The little Ghoorka, however, when asked why he wore a green coat answered, drawing himself up, "Khubsūrati ke waste, Sahib!" (For beauty, sir!) They *are* the jolliest little beggars, these Ghoorkas, with their bullet

heads, Chinese eyes, and broad grin almost from ear to ear. I noticed, too, how much they fraternized with our English soldiers, and it was no uncommon thing to see a Ghoorka and Tommy Atkins arm-in-arm. On the sly, you know, our little friend is rather fond of his liquor, too, not that I wish to insinuate for a moment that that is the reason of the apparently mutual understanding between him and Tommy! The parson, who, by the way, had been on leave, rejoined Headquarters on the 15th, and a very fine regiment, the 5th Punjab Native Infantry, who were all dressed in posteens, marched in on the following day. They certainly were big men and had a remarkably fine and haughty bearing, and a swinging pace. Indeed, I heard a looker-on remark to an officer from Madras that they would compare very favourably with the Madras troops. Our friend from Southern India didn't appear to

like it at all, and merely said that very often comparisons were odious. Just as he said it my little dog took it into her head to "go" straight for a rather cheeky-looking fox-terrier that had just come up (not from Madras !) and they soon got well mixed up together and finally had to be separated. I dined with General Roberts the same day, and Colonel Perkins, R.E., arrived during dinner time. I was somewhat disappointed the next day to hear that my services on the Staff were no longer required, so I there and then applied to leave the force and get back to India, especially as the war appeared to be concluded. This was managed all right, but I was ordered in the first instance to march up to the Peiwar Kotal for a short tenure of duty, and was told that I should probably hear shortly about getting back to India with a view to a hill station for the coming hot weather. That was really not

such a bad place at this time, and everything was scrubbed and brightened up for the advent of the Commander-in-Chief. I noticed what a fine lot of recruits the 29th N.I. had got. I think there were about 150 of them drilling. The Rajah Pattiâla's Artillery was also at Thall, but they looked weedy as compared with ours, although the men (Sikhs) were tall.

On the 18th—a lovely day, full of sunshine—the Commander-in-Chief arrived at Thall with his Staff and retinue. It was a gala day, no doubt, and the garrison turned out spick and span for inspection. Sir Frederick Haines's fine and genial face greeted everybody as he passed by, and he appeared to take the deepest interest in everything around him. A salute was duly fired off by Pattiâla's Artillery in a rather spasmodic manner, but still they meant well, no doubt, and it sounded "grand," as they

say in Ireland. The sun poured down its golden stream of light on everybody, and altogether some excitement reigned in Thall. Old "Brab" stalked in upon us in the middle of it all. By the bye, he was the very d—l to walk, and where he had come from that day goodness only knows! He was always, too, the pink of neatness under the most varying circumstances, and his calm demeanour, matter-of-fact kind of manner, and apparent ability to command all kinds of luxuries and knick-knacks even to "leathers" and kid gloves (during the campaign) would positively have astonished many of my readers. He was a rattling good fellow withal, and a great favourite.

All the "swells" started for the seat of war on the following day, and I took the opportunity of tacking myself on to them, bound as I was for the Peiwar Kotal, for the Chief would be certain to visit that place. We did twelve miles and

camped at Mandori, and a shave went the usual rounds of camp that Yakoob Khan was on his way to Jellalabad to seek aid from the British against his brother (?) who was, too, an applicant for the throne of Cabul, and that he (Yakoob Khan) had actually invited our troops to advance within a couple of miles of that place. I may mention that the telegraph wire between Thall and Kuram was found cut just after we had started.

We reached a place called Chanak on the 20th, where I had tiffin with Collis of the 21st P.N.I., and pushed on to Ibramzai on the following day. There the Chief inspected some of the Native Contingent. Kuram was in sight on the 22nd and after a long and fast journey we pitched on a large, stony plain in that neighbourhood. Kuram in the summer time must look rather pretty ; because, unlike most of the places I had come across in Afghanistan, trees, and fine

ones, too, were pretty thickly grown there, and I noticed several avenues on the way to the fort lined by very fine ones. There was also a good sized fruit garden near the house which Wali Mahomed, late Governor of Kuram, had lived in. Since our troops had arrived, great improvements, of course, had taken place in Kuram, and the Ghoorkas seemed quite at home in their fort-like building, which I heard was formerly used for the Ameer's Cavalry. I went all over the large fort in the afternoon, in which had been found large stores of ammunition and powder, etc., when we first took it. Numbers of small apartments were built inside and an inner kind of keep stood in the centre of the building. I found also what had been used as a Turkish (?) bath room, and the Harem Serai where the ladies of the household had resided. This latter was perhaps the smartest part of the fort, and had since been converted

into a hospital for the Ghoorka Regiment. A large *durbâr* hall was also there, and had been appropriated as a hospital for European troops.

Our force at Kuram was duly inspected by the Commander-in-Chief, and consisted of—

One Squadron 9th Lancers (who had already taken the place of the 10th Hussars).

One Squadron 5th Punjab Cavalry.

12th Bengal Cavalry.

F/a Battery Royal Horse Artillery.

Two Companies 72nd Highlanders.

5th Ghoorkhas.

5th Punjab Native Infantry.

21st Punjab Native Infantry.

On the 23rd we proceeded to Habib Kila, otherwise called the Peiwar Cantonment. This place is situated at the foot of the Peiwar Kotal, and, I believe, is about 6,000 feet high. As you leave Kuram, Habib Kila appears quite close, because the road between is so very flat. However, an imperceptible rise in the ground does take place, and after

a dreary march of about fourteen miles—on and on—you arrive at your destination. The Afghan troops in some force had been quartered in this cantonment (perhaps during the hot weather only?) and what was their Commanding Officer's house was now occupied by Brigadier-General Thelwell. The remainder of the dwellings were allotted to the 72nd Highlanders, who, by the bye, had got a pretty snug ante and mess room. I had lunch with them the day we arrived, and enjoyed it very much, for they had apparently received many little luxuries by some means from India. We were now quite under the Sufed Khoh range, and Sik Arām (the highest peak) towered over our heads clad in snow. At this time a snow-storm was going on, and a strong wind was blowing sharp enough to cut one in two. My little dog, Monkey, did not know what to make of the snow falling from the skies; she had

never seen such a thing before, and stood gazing at it for some minutes. It was really wonderful what good condition the little animal was in, considering the very scanty fare she was at most times obliged to subsist upon. Monkey had never properly given in on the march until the day on which I arrived at Habib Kila, when she several times lay down panting on the road, and at last I was obliged to take her on to the pommel of the saddle. I saw several camels dying by the road-side, and their masters sitting by them bemoaning their loss.

The next day was a very wet one, and we were consequently not able to get on. A change in the force was about to take place, viz., the 21st P.N.I. to go back to Kohât on account of the high rate of sickness among the men, and the 11th Native Infantry to relieve them. Snow was falling fast in front of us, and the mountains were enveloped in

clouds. We were enabled to proceed, however, on the 25th, and arrived safely on the summit of the Peiwar Kotal, where the 8th King's were stationed. I found that that regiment had cast aside their tents and substituted well-built huts, over which they must have spent a deal of labour; they looked very snug, notwithstanding that they leaked a good deal when the rain came down or the snow melted.

The ascent of the Peiwar is very precipitous, much more so than the hills in India. The road up is narrow and zig-zag to distraction, so much so that you appear to turn the corner every few yards. It took some time getting to the top (about half an hour as well as I can remember), although looking up from the foot it does not appear a very great distance. The road was not ridable and in parts hardly walkable, and the Kotal was simply covered with snow, in some

parts it being twelve feet thick. This immense white covering, variegated here and there by pretty fir trees, made the scene very beautiful. It was again snowing hard after we had arrived, and as night closed in one thought there was a good deal of the dismal about the place, far away as it was from civilization. I mentioned before that the huts, which consisted of large logs, were not very serviceable on account of the leakage. Well, my first night's experience fully bore this out, for I no sooner lay me down than the water began drip, drip, drip, on my very nose. "This won't do," said I to the fellow who had given me shelter, and I was obliged to get up and arrange a rather weather-beaten waterproof sheet over my head; this was done by tying the corners of it and nailing them to the roof. It was a change, whether for better or worse, from the conventional tent, and I thought it not half bad when my

good host volunteered to light a log fire at one end of the hut. I may mention that the Commander-in-Chief appeared very much pleased with the 8th King's, and in a speech paid them great compliments. He, I believe, had been once in that regiment. The men had most certainly improved wonderfully since I had last seen them, and were healthy and well set up. Their dress, too, was smart-looking and serviceable, for they had warm-looking greyish-brown Norfolk coats; their ordinary regimental trowsers, with drab putties up to within three inches of the knee, where the trowser was folded neatly over *à la* knickerbocker.

I may mention, that having inspected the Peiwar Kotal and the troops, which also included the 28th Native Infantry, the Commander-in-Chief and Staff bade adieu and returned Indiaward.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE PEIWAR KOTAL.

I HAD been detailed for duty at the Peiwar Kotal, pending the promise that if nothing unforeseen happened I should proceed to India. To make myself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances was therefore the main object, and as my worthy friend, in whose hut I had slept the first night, had kindly offered to share for evermore his domain with me—the bargain was struck—and my “luggage” and “valuables” were stowed away accordingly. I set about rigging up my waterproof sheet in a more substantial manner, as the constant dropping of water upon one’s face during sleep, or rather attempt to sleep, was anything but pleasant.

The next day was decidedly more cheerful, as the sun broke out in earnest, and I took the opportunity of a general survey of the place. I noticed a wonderful echo, by the way, and the firing of the 12 o'clock gun made a very harsh and peculiar "whang" through the fir trees. The sound and echo of the constant chopping of wood for fire, etc., strongly reminded me of the hills in India; and talk about Christmas trees! what would the youngsters at home have given for the row of lovely little firs that decked the front of the Padre's house. Talking of the Padre—that dear old, indefatigable Roman son of the black cloth—I found him as happy and contented as ever in his little hut, and I had a long chat with him. I was sorry to hear from him that he had been suffering a good deal from ill-health, and cheered him up as best I could. He worked hard among the men; and I hope some day,

as I feel sure, he will get his reward. The men appeared as rosy and jolly as sand boys, and snow-balling was freely carried on. There was perhaps a want of spirits—I mean rum, etc., among them—which was fully verified by the fact that one Tommy, bid as high as 20 rupees (£2) for a bottle of the precious liquor, which, I suppose, had been collected by a total abstainer and put up to auction. I found two of my mutual friends still not satisfied with the amount of gaiety going on, and given, as of old, to curse the “surroundings” of their campaigning life.

My dog was more perplexed than ever, and no wonder, at the sight of the snow on the ground, for no such thing as the white enemy ever graced the plains of India; so she, for something better to do, promptly rolled in it, looking most peculiar when she had finished. One of the first undertakings I performed was to travel to the bottom of

the hill and up again. The zig-zag road was perhaps more slushy than ever the day four of us set out, and what with slipping and falling we were precious tired when we had finished. Going down the hill was bad enough, but the pull up again was a great deal worse. I may state, however, that before many days had elapsed the journey to the foot of the Peiwar Kotal and up again was not a bit tiring to us, and from constant practice and fresh air we thought nothing of doing it two or three times a day. A constant condition of wet feet was the order of the day, notwithstanding the daily applications of grease to our "ammunitions," but this too, we got wonderfully used to.

For a little variety, two of the huts caught fire on the 26th, evidently from sparks flying about on the brittle pine logs. Of course this was a serious matter as it meant

not only the losing of a home but the building of another. Where on earth he got it from I don't know, but one of the fellows had the audacity to offer me some scent as I was passing his hut, and, behold, produced a bottle of delicious Opoponax as if straight from the realms of Rimmel or Breidenbach. Do you know, readers, that even that sprinkle of sweet perfume carried one back, as does a pretty air or an old song, to past times!

On the 27th some of us explored in the direction of the Spingawai Kotal. This was an undertaking, as the snow lay very thick, and it was little wonder that at times we lost our way or track, and almost lost each other too.

On the 29th, Dennys of the 28th, brought some important news for General Roberts from Ali Kheyl (I forgot to say that the 28th had already left the Peiwar and gone to Ali Kheyl), but it was a secret, and no one could

guess what it was about. Some fellows turned up the same day from Habib Kila, and made the place somewhat livelier. Among them was Josephs of the Telegraph Department. I noticed how extremely short of breath I was on the Peiwar Kotal. This may have been caused by the rarefied air, as we were some 8,600 feet high.

On Sunday afternoon, the 30th March, I set out with three of the 8th officers on a riding excursion, which I shall not forget in a hurry. We saddled our ponies and started with the idea of getting round the Spingawai by the Zaburdast Kila Road and home again, which necessitated our travelling through some very deep snow. Of course it was necessary that we should be back before dark, for many reasons, chiefly, however, on account of the danger we might run in being attacked perhaps in a helpless condition by Afghans. I shall never forget it.

We started through the slushy road at a gallop, all well mounted indeed, and soon came to the end of the Zabardast Kila Road. Here we had to turn sharp to the right and enter the snow. It lay pretty deep, and as we went on became deeper, for there was a gradual ascent. It was impossible for the four of us to keep together, so we each managed to get on as best we could ; in fact, according to the height of the ponies and the depth of the snow. Soon we crossed a river with huge slippery boulders and snowy banks. Then I caught in a tree and had to be extricated ; next a pony came to grief—but on we went. My legs were already wet through, and snow was beginning to fall fast ; indeed we were soon in three feet of it, and as the evening grew late my pony's head was almost resting on the snow. At last I was stuck properly. The other fellows were almost in the same predicament,

and with the greatest difficulty we managed to dismount and drag the poor animals as best we could through the mass. It was no use, the night was fast approaching, the Spingawai lay another half mile in front of us, and so did twelve feet of snow, and certain death, so we took counsel and began to retrace our steps. Of course if it were bad going, it was worse coming back, as the snow had increased. However we managed to get "home" pretty well drenched, and not altogether pleased with the undertaking. I got a nasty chill, and felt very seedy all night and the next day, but a journey up and down the Peiwar Kotal twice set me to rights again.

By the bye, I noticed the same day the skeleton of a horse that had belonged to the 12th Bengal Cavalry lying at the bottom of the Kotal. It had been shot in the affair on the 2nd December.

On the 31st the 23rd Pioneers passed through on their way to Ali Kheyl, and the following day General Roberts and Staff went through, bound for the same place, followed by a wing of the 72nd Highlanders. In fact it rather looked as if our army were making a move in the direction of Cabul, and that perhaps ere long we should have the Peiwar at our backs.

During our life in this part of the world, as in the hills of India, the conventional bear story went the rounds, and why not? Of course we must have *our* bear as well as anybody else, even in such uncivilized parts. So off we started one day, my companions being three very good fellows whose names need not be mentioned. Of course the usual number of natives, armed with bludgeons of mighty dimensions, accompanied us, but with very little heart to back them up if it were required.

We were obliged to cross a good many *khuds* (ravines) in order to get to the supposed haunt of the grizzly one, but at last arrived at our destination. Then the natives all began to look at one another, and at their bare legs, perhaps a little sorry that real work was about to commence.

A large cavern stood before us, and that was the supposed habitation of the animal we sought.

"Hush!" shouted one of my aforementioned pals (an Irishman). "The quoter the betther, for it won't do to let the baste know what we intend doin'."

"Very good," replied another. "Were you ever in Doblin?" "I did," shouted another, whose answer was supposed to be a response from the Irishman. That was an old joke I must mention, and we all thereupon burst into a laugh that echoed and re-echoed down the mighty glens and rocks,

and through the pines—like one reads about in a fairy tale.

To return to the bear. The first thing to be considered was how to get at him. The natives, full of original ideas as they always are, suggested the tying of furze and bramble to the end of a long bamboo which they had brought with them. That was tried for twenty minutes, the natives standing all the time at a very safe distance and nudging each other confidentially, at the same time trying their utmost to look as plucky as possible under the circumstances. In this they did not succeed, however. "The devil a bear," whispered the Irishman.

"Right you are," said the fellow standing next him, who by his face (especially as he was rather given that way) I could see was preparing a horrid joke, "and who's for coming home?"

"Oh, *you* can go if you like, you old

cow," replied one of the others who was awfully keen on the bear; "but we stay here until we catch a sight of the bear."

"All right," rejoined the maker of jokes; "you fellows may stop here as long as you please, and as you call me an old cow"—as he said this he made a bound in the direction of a small ravine—"I choose the *khud* (ravine)." Cries of Oh! and Shame! were the only answer to this horrible atrocity, and at the same time, "No bear, Sahib," greeted us from one of the wily ones who had just pushed his nearest and dearest friend into the cave. This victim of friendliness discovered, because he couldn't help it, that it was not a bear but an unfortunate Afghan dog, lately wounded (we supposed) in one of the hind legs, that occupied the cavern, and who had been the unconscious cause of the bear story and our expedition. We all trotted home disgusted.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WELCOME TELEGRAM, AND RETURN TO INDIA.

As wood was so plentiful on the Peiwar, I determined to erect, as best I could, two stalls for the better protection of my ponies. Goodness knows they deserved it, poor little things, for they had carried me and my baggage, up to the time I write, successfully over many a rugged path. Of course these pony stables would of necessity be of a very primitive pattern, but still might answer in affording a shelter from the snow and bitter winds that sometimes blew. My plans, however, had scarcely been matured, when lo! a telegram arrived for me—the telegram, which ordered my return to India at once, proceeding to Umballa for further orders. Now I liked the stables very much, but that telegram,

I must say, knocked them completely out of my head. I also liked campaigning as well as most fellows, but the order for home (India) made campaigning positively disgusting. I don't think five minutes were thrown idly away—pots and pans were hurriedly collected—rations, boots, soap, and other commodities were thrown indiscriminately into my hold-all, together with my bedding. The little tent that had sheltered me until I arrived on the Peiwar was sold for 50 rupees to a brother officer. My poor servant in his delight (our servants had had a pretty rough time of it, remember) forgot even to say his prayers, tumbled over everything available for that purpose, and cheerfully prepared for the journey downwards, so that in about twenty minutes we were ready to start. Many good-byes were of course the order of the day, messages numerous and erratic were delivered to me for friends, my servant bade

adieu with a sarcastic smile to his companions, and then we got "under weigh." We were obliged to ride to Habib Kila, the first seven or eight miles, without any escort, and I must say that once or twice I felt anything but happy when we came face to face with flocks of horrid-looking Afghans. However, we arrived unmolested. Now I must mention that as I had disposed of my tent before starting, I was to all practical purposes houseless, so determined to take my chance if needs must, and trust to the generosity of any friend I might come across who could give me shelter. I sold my tent for two reasons—first, because I had an offer for it (as much, by the bye, as that originally given by me), and might not be able to get rid of it at any other time ; and secondly, I wanted to travel as fast and light as possible. I was determined to push on to Kuram the same day, which would be another thirteen miles,

so I showed my orders to the Officer Commanding at Habib Kila, who gave me two Sowars as escort (the road now was considered dangerous), and I told my servant what my intentions were. He appeared delighted, although of course twenty-one miles is rather a tiring walk. I met a few fellows at Habib Kila, and had a bit of lunch with them before proceeding. By the bye, one of them was poor Montenaro, of the Mountain Battery stationed there, who was afterwards killed. Just after we started for Kuram a terrific storm came on, accompanied by hailstones (which were as large as marbles, and some of them in square lumps) and lightning. This was terrible, as we could not possibly face it, so there was nothing to do but halt. To protect us from the hail we took the saddles off the horses and lay down as best we could behind them, turning the animals' hind quarters to the storm. It

lasted, thank goodness, only half-an-hour, and then the rain came down in torrents. However, we were obliged to get on, as it was getting late, and one could not (indeed there was an order against it) be out after dusk. The saddles were consequently put on again, and we once more turned our faces towards Kuram, where we arrived soaked through and through, after a miserable march. The next thing to trouble one was of course the getting of shelter. Owing to the goodness of Major Moriarty I fared capitally, for he had housed himself pretty comfortably in the fort, and was able to give me a floor for my bedding. My servant also managed very well with Moriarty's domestics. A hot currie was most relishing, I can tell you, and having quaffed our rum-and-water—hot that night, and smoked the friendly herb, I was precious glad to turn in, and slept soundly for six hours.

The following day we did another fifteen miles, arriving at Badesh Kheyl. It rained a good deal on the way, and the weather appeared very unsettled. I felt a bit tired on getting in, but a most unexpected treat awaited me. I don't think I have ever felt more happy than I did that day. The fact is, I was pretty sure of meeting friends at Kuram, where we had a garrison, but confess that I was rather timid of how I should get on at Badesh Kheyl. I knew we had no troops there, and had the worst come to the worst, we should have been obliged to go on, tired as we all were, to the next post. As it happened, however, and as I have just mentioned, an unexpected treat was in store for me. I was, in fact, met with open arms by a handsome-looking native officer, who came forward to meet me as I rode in. It turned out that he was one of the officers of a native contingent (belonging to the Rajah Nabba),

which had been placed at the disposal of the British Government, and which was used in garrisoning posts in Afghanistan, where we could not afford to place troops—*they* were scarce enough, goodness knows. Other Rajahs loyal to our Queen (Pattiâla, &c.), had come forward with similar offers of help to enable us to hold the country we were in, and much praise is due, not only to those generous and loyal princes, but also to the efficient manner in which their troops carried out the different duties allotted to them. The principal duties performed by them were of course the holding of these posts, and also the supplying of escorts and horses to British officers passing to and from the front. The native officer who welcomed me brought me into a large tent, which was in charge of a gorgeously-attired Khidmatghar, who salaamed to the ground almost on seeing me. A table went the length of the tent, and was loaded

with dainties of all kinds, which to the eye of a campaigning soldier had many charms. I was asked at once what I would have in the form of meat, my tempter informing me that "Irish estew" could be brought in a few minutes. He did not stop at that, but as if he would perpetrate a joke upon me, asked if I would like some "simpkin" (champagne). This was too much for my feelings, and when I was told—indeed when I saw written up in black-and-white, on a card pasted to the tent wall—that the Rajah Nabba wished every British Officer passing through to "help himself," and stay as long as he wished, I could not help blessing my respected friend from the very depths of my heart. I found also that my ponies had been taken away, fed, watered, and put under a tent, and that my servant had fared as well. I was shown a tent wherein to make my bed, and a sentry was posted at the door, for this

was a very dangerous district. I passed an excellent night, and heard as I turned in the rain pattering and the wind howling, but I cared not for either; and thanks to the Rajah Nabba—my gratitude to whom I wish now to record—I awoke the next morning contented with everything. All the native officers were civil and communicative, and informed me that the tribes round about were growing very troublesome; also that Major Hammond, of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, some of whom were at Chanak, the next post, feared an attack. The next morning, a Sunday, was very wet, the clouds hanging thickly o'er head, and no apparent chance of sunshine. However, although Nabba's people pressed me a good deal to stay another day, I was determined to get on to Thall, which was distant thirty-five miles—rather an undertaking, but still nothing to a determined man.

Now, had I been dependent on my two ponies alone, I could not have possibly done thirty-five miles after the distance already completed—that would have been too much to have expected; but as the Officer Commanding had kindly provided me with a good charger, also with an order which would allow of him being changed at every post on the way to Thall, I of course made up my mind to start in the pouring rain. Two Sowars were also given me as escort, and they were to be relieved at each post by two others. We left Badesh Kheyl at 7 a.m. One Sowar I had told off to accompany the pony with the baggage. I gave my servant the horse lent me and mounted one of my ponies, taking the other Sowar with me. Chanak was reached soon, as we rode pretty hard. My pony was very hot and winded, in fact I was very sorry to find that he would not eat the feed of grain offered him. Some

native troops were stationed at Chanak, to the Commanding Officer of whom I showed my pass, and obtained another horse—this time a very smart grey, that looked like travelling. The pony was left until the baggage came up, which he was to accompany at his ease. My little grey carried me at a swinging gallop to Alizai, the next post, the sun in the meantime struggling to break out and disperse the rain at intervals.

At Alizai I got another mount—this time the regular old style of native horse, cream-coloured, with pinkish face and white eyes, a very ugly gait, very rough to ride, and with a mouth of iron. He carried me safely, however, to Chapri, and having once more changed horses, I made another start for Thall. Two Sowars were allotted to me for this the last stage of my journey, as it was considered a very dangerous bit, which, as future events proved, was perfectly true.

When about half way into Thall one of the escort, whose horse was pumping terribly, told me that his charger would not, or rather could not, go any farther. I quite believed him, for his horse looked as if it were dying. Go back therefore he must, and alone; and as he probably had to walk the whole way by the side of his horse, I did not envy him his journey for many reasons. I, too, was left with only one Sowar, and going through the nasty defiles towards Thall we met some very awkward-looking fellows, who undoubtedly meant mischief. Thall was safely reached, however, at one o'clock, and I think my readers will allow that going through a rocky, dangerous country, in the pouring rain for seventy miles—the distance being completed in three days—was not half a bad performance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING arrived, I made straight for the 14th Bengal Lancers' mess (luckily for me they had not yet left Thall) where I had an excellent tiffin and met some old friends. The next question that presented itself was where I was to sleep, and what about bedding? My ponies with the baggage, I must mention, had not arrived, as I had pushed on to Thall so quickly, and there was little probability of their being able to get in till the following day. The gods were propitious, however, for I spotted an empty tent in the main thoroughfare of the camp, which I discovered belonged to a friend of mine who had left for a few days. I therefore determined to shake down under my good friend's roof. I knew him well enough to be able to take that liberty, and, having borrowed a couple of

rugs from Wilmot of the 14th Lancers, made down a sort of bed with the aid of half a dozen pounds of straw.

Now Thall presented again a vastly improved aspect at this time. Regiments going to and fro constantly, transport officers passing through (having their head-quarters at Thall), etc., tended to civilize the place extensively, and a good post-office tent had been erected, and a regular post established. The dāk bungalow tent held a commanding post near the 14th Bengal Lancers' lines, and there were a couple of rough-and-ready shops belonging to the indefatigable, money-making, polite and ever loyal Parsee; and also a magazine for war implements. Whitened stones, and even trees, marked the camp pathways. All this made Thall more habitable and better looking than the old stony hill it was when our troops first arrived. In fact, with an invite to live with the hospitable Lancers during my stay there

—not to mention the cordiality of the officers—I felt that I was lucky and better off than I had expected to be. The musical tendencies of my esteemed friend Neville (who I heard afterwards distinguished himself at Cabul), the ready wit and propensities for puns and acrostics of my old Pindi acquaintance, Mitford, and the never changing good humour of Eardley Wilmot, all helped to beguile away what otherwise would have been weary hours.

The next day I was delighted to see the ponies come in. I thereupon made a bargain with Ismailjee (a Parsee) on the spot and got rid of some surplus stock of no use to me. I have no doubt that the said Ismailjee “did me” and was the gainer by our little transaction, but what did it matter? Determining to lose as little time as possible I packed off my baggage the following day, which was the 8th of April, with instructions to make for

Kohât. I forget now whether I got any escort for them—I fancy I did, as the road between Thall and Kohât was extremely dangerous—and murders, and plunderings, and the cutting of the telegraph wires were the order of the day. On the afternoon of the same day I was lucky enough to find a companion for my journey down country, an officer who was about to leave the service. We therefore agreed to start the following morning, making up our minds for a stiff journey. We said good-bye to all our friends, *and* to Thall probably for ever, on the morning of the 9th, and rode to Hungoo, a distance of thirty-six miles. There we put up at the dâk bungalow for the night, and left for Kohât the next day. It was twenty-seven miles into Kohât, and as the day was very hot we were both pretty tired when we got in, having ridden sixty-three miles in two days! In fact my friend, I think, got a

slight sunstroke, for he was very unwell at Kohât and unable to come on any farther with me. I have never seen or heard of him since. I managed to obtain half a room at the Kohât dâk bungalow, and, having had a wash and a brandy and soda, made straight for my old chum Charley, who was at the time holding an appointment in the station.

Of course I received a very warm reception from him and his wife, and having discovered a neighbouring piano we there betook ourselves and devoted our time to music. I only spent the following day in Kohât as I was anxious to get a few days in Rawul Pindi, where I had a bungalow to dispose of and many matters to arrange. Accordingly I left on the 12th at five a.m. and was once more tearing, rumbling, and bumping over the dâk road in the mail cart. As we neared dear old Pindi, in the dusk all seemed and looked very familiar to me, and there was a

great stillness and peacefulness in the air after the tumult of troops warfaring at the front.

My story must now close. Suffice it is to say that all matters of business were satisfactorily arranged during the week I remained at Rawul Pindi. I met many good old friends there, who were sorry that the old adage—"The best of friends must part"—was about to be so soon fulfilled in our case. I may mention that I travelled to Umballa as fast as I could by dâk gharry and train, giving instructions to my servants to bring on the ponies and my dog Monkey by road. What a long and tedious journey it was for them ! They left Rawul Pindi on the 17th of April and arrived at the hill station, to which I had been posted, on the 11th of May, doing a march almost every day. I was not astonished, therefore, to find the ponies looking miserably thin and

bad conditioned when they arrived; and the poor little dog—well, it was covered with sores (from bad feeding and neglect) and sore-footed. Everybody, in fact, wanted a rest and a change. One of my servants did not appear! He had been a good servant to me, and on one occasion after the action at Mattūn in the Khost country, having picked up an Afghan's sword, I presented it to him, telling him to wear it until we returned to India. That poor fellow was taken ill with dysentery soon after leaving Pindi to join me, and died by the road-side. One of his last wishes before his death was that the sword might be taken very carefully to his master. As I write, the old sword is standing in a corner of the room and brings back the day when the poor fellow's message was delivered to me!

THE END.



